

Nuovo Milano

Jayne Cochrane
Russell Taylor



Foreward

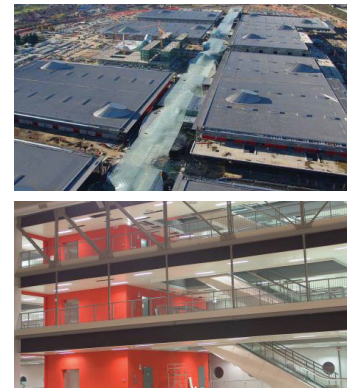
This essay differs from others written this year in that it wasn't planned or pre-conceived before we left. The group left for Rome in 2006 with a sense in advance of a city that was "bubbling". With Rome being the current 'hot' city in Italy, Milan was relegated as the reliable, long-standing innovation capital, the design city, the industrial capital of Italy. There is a certain feeling in Milan, a feeling of hurried pace that is innate to the Milanese culture and lifestyle. But the energy the group felt in Rome in 2005 was palpable, the signs and cues that designers, projects, and young people are returning to the Eternal City and bringing back vibrancy to the design culture undeniable. As a result, our study in 2006 spent much more time in Rome than Milan. Usually brash by comparison Milan seemed at first blushing to be in an ebbing moment. Designers in Milan had heard about the new developments in Rome, and also remarked that Milan seemed suddenly more staid. We began our time in Milan this year by reaffirming this perception of an unexpected unstable possibility and beginning to collect quotes to write that paper. But something shifted as we dug deeper and found that Milan, like Rome, is also beginning to evolve in new ways. Milan, after decades of stagnation in its urban fabric, again, like Rome, coming alive project by project, or rather, slowly experiencing a large increase in new architecture - finally making the post-industrial jump while building up several areas of the city. In our Milan interviews, we asked all interviewees their thoughts on Milan: even whether it's worth coming back each year, and the envisioned state of Milan in years to follow. The answers were generally uncertain, rather tentative, in a city not known for this characteristic. Several people we spoke to explained that the amount of new projects underway does not guarantee the future success of Milan. So what we began to piece together was that much is changing in Milan, very fast. Old stalwart businesses and design companies are changing ownership. A generation of "maestros" is aging. Manufacturing is moving or has moved out. A global outlook is developing. Exciting yet a little scary. "Italian Design" is changing its meaning. A new Milan is forming. This paper contextualizes the new urban developments as a way of beginning to understand what is underway, focusing on a few key projects and analyzing the Italian qualities inherent to each, in an effort to predict how the new Milan will look, feel, and sustain itself.

Since the Italian economic miracle of the 1950's and 60's, Milan has been the true global city of Italy, a trend-setting fashion and design capital of the world. The ever-evolving design scene combined with the amount of large firms in the Lombardy area has sustained Milan's geographic expansion, reflected by its reputation and ongoing presence in the global marketplace and consciousness. Unfortunately, Milan's growth has seemed to only take place outside of the 'Centro' itself, as neighboring suburban areas such as Rho and Sesto San Giovanni have experienced substantial growth and population increase. While the distant suburbs grow, the actual historic center of Milan remains virtually unchanged in decades, leaving a somewhat uninspired landscape that lacks the social consideration and post-industrial forward-thinking of other large European cities. In Milan, behind those uninspiring walls, you are in one of the world's great design centers; it is an innovation engine that chugs along without pause – you just wouldn't know it. Other European cities have more visibly shown considerable growth by either placing signature landmark buildings in their downtown core or by building up 'dead' areas of the city. Milan, meanwhile, has not managed growth properly, and the resultant effect is a variety of areas and districts in Milan with a large disconnected feeling between them - and a downtown core that's historically fascinating yet small and doesn't quite match the modern business atmosphere of the town. Ron Arad has described his young impressions of Milan as "a place where there was an industry and there was a happy symbiosis that didn't breed a lot of excitement; didn't push the boundaries." (Arad, 2005) As Italy's economic woes deepen, one could begin to worry about Milan's position, and one would certainly wonder whether this is a post-industrial city at all, by comparison. However, things are seemingly looking up for Milan. New developments are starting in the heart of the city, projects that are both updating existing areas and creating new urban areas for both public and private use. It is the public part that Milan most sorely lacks, and as an Italian city, truly needs. There is of course, no direct correlation between new buildings and sustained innovation. But many European cities that have made the jump have also evidenced this kind of development. We'll cite some prominent examples below. It seems a reasonable formal cue to begin from. At a time when Milan feels (and generally looks) stagnant, a diverse citywide series of projects seem poised to re-energize the city, and this paper explores what certainly appears to be the first clear signs of a shift in the making.

New development in Milan is long overdue. Michele Rossi of Park Associati Architetti, on the subject of living in Milan, said “You feel like you’re living in a museum. You don’t really feel the feeling of a contemporary world.” (Rossi, 2006) The completion of the Nuovo Polo Fiera, a massive trade fair space designed by Massimiliano Fuksas in the Rho district, seems to have jump-started a wave of development all over Milan. The Fiera is a major project also because it houses among other events, the annual Salone del Mobile, the Milan Furniture Fair -the world’s best and largest design event, period. The new Fiera looks to be that signature building every post-industrial city needs, while redrawing the map of the city by scale of the development around. However, unlike such other city developments as London’s Millennium project, what sets Milan’s new development structure apart is the variety unique to each project, and the diffusion throughout the city. There is a substantially wide range of function (parks, train stations, government buildings, cultural



Massimiliano Fuksas’ new Fiera site in Rho



centers), scale (from small building additions to complete overhauls of existing sites), and architects (imports Norman Foster and Zaha Hadid are as busy as native Milanese Cino Zucchi and Antonio Citterio) between all the projects. Major projects with mass scale and significant public interface are planned or underway all around the city and its suburbs, not just the central area. But large scale projects are getting closer to the Duomo than ever before and being well-connected by the city’s ever-growing metro system. And it is this connectiveness which holds the most promise for Milan. As Massimiliano Fuksas noted on the issue of suburban relations, “what I think is most important right now is to work in this area (between them). To understand what has to be the

area between the suburbs and the city.” (Fuksas, 2006) As a result of these circumstances, all areas of Milan are set to dramatically change, resulting in a completely different urban landscape by the next decade. And while each project is quite different and unique, there are inherent traits that each project shares. Following Italian urban planning standards, all new developments incorporate multi-use, open public areas, and a sense of designing at a human scale. These are deep Italian patterns and ideologies that can be applied to all new projects in Milan; a re-assurance that the new growth isn't set to alienate any Milanese. However, with the diversity in the projects, there exists three meta categories from which at least one can be applied to each project: mass use, culture, and global business.

The Nuovo Fiera Polo was the first catalyst of the new Milan development. By moving the site of the Salone del Mobile outside of the Centro and closer to Malpensa airport (into the suburb of Rho), the trade fair boosted the area while linking it with the city core through metro. Massimiliano Fuksas' 1300 meter long glass roof sculpture covers the main promenade of the site, providing a



Interior renderings of the new Fiera (top) and Centrale Stazione (bottom)

truly original breath-taking architectural wonder. At the same time it is highly functional, with a metro exit at the beginning of the walkway flowing into multiple levels of escalators and moving sidewalks to move the extreme masses of people as quickly and efficiently through the site as possible (when needed). The Fiera was designed to deal with the storm of visitors to the Salone, as each year all of Milan becomes a showcase for design. With Fuksas' site, the crowd entering via metro is instantly immersed in the site thanks to the elegant

and functional design solution and then dispersed effectively to the exhibition buildings set left and right along the central spine. Along with the Fiera's inventive systems for mass transport and the extension of the metro Red line far north to Rho-Pero, the main train stations of Milan are also being modernized. Milan's Stazione Centrale, the second largest station in Italy, is being re-designed at the underground level, incorporating a more efficient method of moving people between the entrance, exit, train tracks, and metro entrances. The outdoor area is also being overhauled to provide a more attractive and organic piazza, a piazza that currently has a very inorganic and uninviting feel, and is framed on one side by Gio Ponti's magisterial Pirelli Tower. Other steps such as reducing vehicle traffic around the station show the enduring respect for the people, a trademark of Italian urban planning. Stazione di Repubblica and Stazione de Porta Venezia are also being re-designed, providing clean and open floor plans with wider walkways and escalators. These projects will ensure that increased growth and tourism all over Milan can be handled effectively, facilitating business while at the same time providing attractive contemporary architecture that can handle mass use on a daily basis. Milan is in fact a dispersed set of centers that can only efficiently be reached by rail, so these changes are important here, for example by more effectively connecting Malpensa and the burgeoning design zones in Zona Tortona to those closer to the traditional design zones around the Quadrilatero, the Via Durini and the Brera.

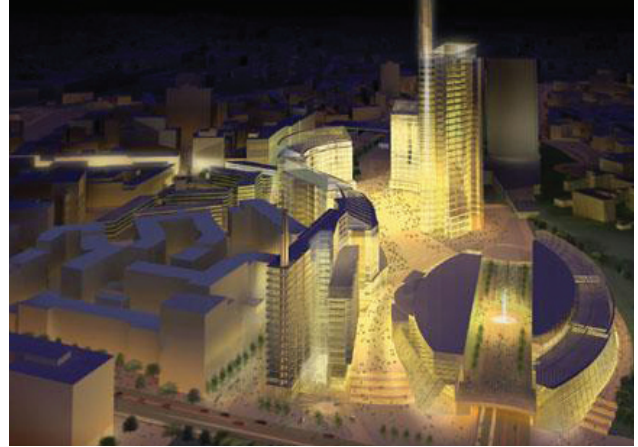
When the economic miracle hit Italy, Milan became the center for production and manufacturing in Italy. Naturally, many businesses chose to situate their head office in the Lombardy capital for proximity's sake. Milan is and has been home to many of Italy's biggest and most-successful companies: Innocenti, Pirelli, Rinascente, Armani, Prada, Fendi, Dolce & Gabanna, Alfa Romeo, Bugatti, and most of the major Italian newspapers and banks, to name a few. The main traditional business areas have built up around the stations at Centrale, Garibaldi and Repubblica thanks to strategic city planning that connects businesses to both the metro and railway lines. In terms of extending business development then, Milan's new projects are taking pragmatic approaches to enhancing the usability and perception of their sites, while building up and servicing those traditional infrastructures.



Nuovo Sede della Regione Lombardia, with the restored Pirelli tower in the background of the left picture

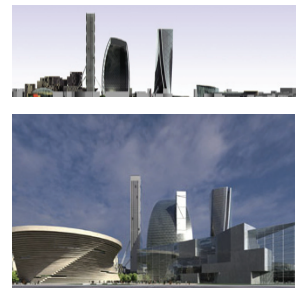
The largest of the new building sites (outside of the vacated Fiera site) is the Nuovo Sede della Regione Lombardia (New Seat of the Lombardy Region), a project consisting of three united parts: a base, a tower, and an outdoor public garden. The areas are designed to fit together seamlessly, to minimize a feeling of disconnection between public and private space on site. At the same time, the areas can exist independently, with government activity uninterrupted in the tower while public conferences take place in the base below. The architecture is evocative and designed at less of a human scale; this is intentional to evoke the power of the Lombardy region. The tower, in particular, dwarfs all existing buildings, standing with the nearby Grattacielo Pirelli (Pirelli Skyscraper) to distinguish the area with a unique skyline. The Pirelli building, Gio Ponti's icon of international style architecture since its completion in 1958, has remained the tallest building in this area until now, and will itself undergo a mostly cosmetic upgrade to integrate it into the surrounding area more contextually. The upgrade will re-align business needs with the modern marketplace by providing technological upgrades throughout the building, while the floor plans will remain untouched as a show of respect for Ponti's architectural vision. The function of the building, meanwhile, will stay the same: congress, law, communication and exposition. Together with the Nuovo Sede, these two buildings are helping boost the new Milan's professional and global business image while demonstrating its power as a production, design and financial capital of Europe.

Italian urban development is recognized for its emphasis on culture and public use. It's no coincidence, then, that the largest projects in Milan revolve around creating new public gathering spaces and parks. La Citta della Moda



The Citta della Moda, showing the combination of public and private buildings, and the focus on usable public space

(The City of Fashion) is an ambitious project across from Stazione Garibaldi, again, strategically building around major rail network points. This project also seeks to chip away at Milan's opaqueness to visitors - despite being one of the world's capitals for fashion, one is hard-pressed in Milan to 'find' it, except for the retail strolls on Via Della Spiga and Montenapoleone, so this development is consciously attempting to showcase Milan's business giants by providing a central location to showcase it. A combination of commercial buildings, residences, schooling, and shops, the area combines a (much-needed) massive urban park with organically arranged buildings curving around a piazza while adding new diversity to the skyline. This combination of unique functions is said to represent the Milanese lifestyle by providing a singular location that contains design, fashion, communication, culture, university, and research in a more integrated and up-front way. To the west of the Citta della Moda, on the grounds of the old Fiera site near Cadorna Station, is Progetto CityLife, a project aiming to define the new Milan.



Progetto CityLife, detailing the impact the buildings will have on the Milan skyline

Three distinct towers, each designed by a different “big-name” architect (Daniel Libeskind, Zaha Hadid, and Arata Isozaki), create a new skyline and symbols of transformation around the central piazza below, which in turn is surrounded by five residential areas, cultural centers, and essential service buildings. Trees snake around all buildings, creating rich areas of authentic nature throughout the site. The theme of Progetto CityLife is that of an area for activity, recreation, ecology, and above all, people. These two cultural projects both exist as areas that aim to encapsulate the Milanese experience in one space. If successful, they can exist both as all-encompassing cultural areas of Milan that evoke the Milanese lifestyle, areas that will attract both visitors and residents equally. As in post-industrial reclamations in other cities in Europe, industrial uses are turning to complex urban zones designed to entice people back downtown and to create symbiotic possibilities through proximity.

With the sheer amount of projects underway, Milan is jumping seemingly at once into a post-industrial urban environment, with a greater focus on linking multiple areas of the city together while providing experiences that are inherently both Milanese and Italian. We asked all designers and architects in Milan this summer their thoughts on the new Milan, and Michele Rossi put it best. “In ten years Milan will be completely different. I don’t know if it is going to be better – I think so, I mean if you like it or not the project I don’t think that is the point. I think the point is to really make a city alive.” (Rossi, 2006) Italian cities have moved excruciatingly through their complex bureaucracies, but it appears clear that both in Rome and Milan, this process is finally well underway. While other European cities have evolved faster than Milan, all Milanese



The Millenium Bridge leading to the Tate Modern Gallery in London, and Herzog and de Maunon’s auditorium, the centerpiece of the Parc del Forum in Barcelona

development is carefully adhering to standards of Italian urban development, providing projects that should remain highly functional but perhaps more importantly, socially-relevant in the future, achieving Rossi's prerogative of making a city "alive". In comparison to large European cities, Barcelona may be the best example of a city that has made a profound jump to post-industrial. After the initial revitalization of their downtown core after the 1992 Olympics, Barcelona completed their rise as a global city with the addition of their Parc del Forum, a site that symbolized the 'New Barcelona', built on the end of the main diagonal road that cuts through the very un-European downtown city grid. This project led to a build up of the entire Forum area, with luxury hotels and new tram lines soon following along the coast line. Likewise, London's Millennium project placed new architecture along the Thames river, providing new landmarks for the city and demonstrating the wealth and culture of the



The Turning Torso in Malmo, and Henning Larsen's new Copenhagen Opera House

town. Smaller European cities, meanwhile, are showing that re-considering the idea of their city can have more immediate results. Rotterdam built up a dense downtown core of sophisticated architecture in a response to the amount of architectural firms in the area. Rotterdam now boasts a skyline full of modern and landmark buildings, comparable to Paris and Frankfurt - a stark contrast to the town that in the past was mainly known for its ship port. Santiago Calatrava's Turning Torso building in Malmo is defining a new identity for the once industrial city, while across the water (and now linked by the Oresund Bridge), Copenhagen is celebrating new projects by Zaha Hadid and Dutch giants MVRDV that are updating the use of existing structures. What ultimately defines Milan's development, however, is their focus on expanding specific pockets of Milan while also having new architecture all over the city. Milan doesn't need a new image, or an entirely new direction for the town. Rather, the city needs a post-industrial shift into a new experience of urbanity,

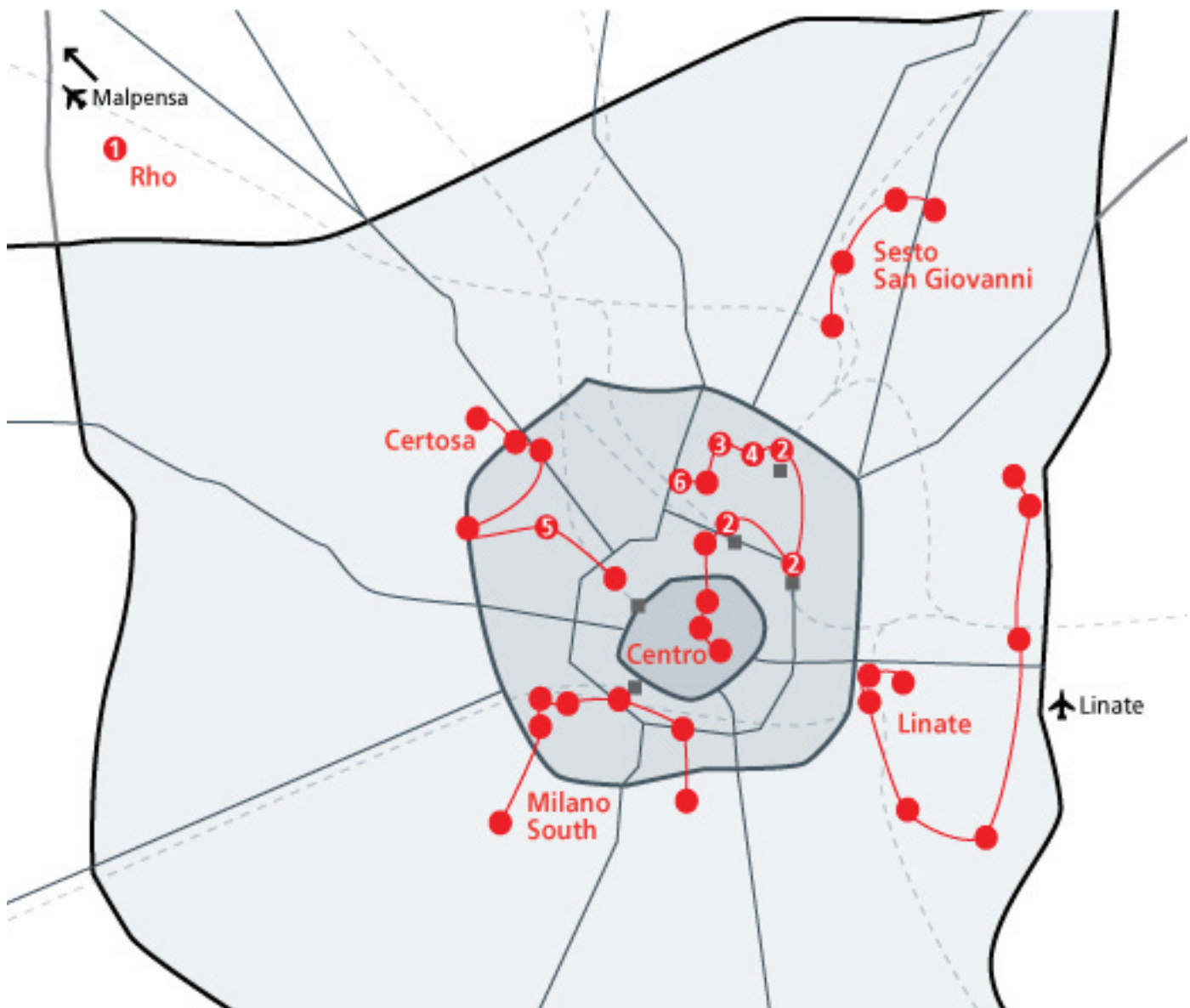
and Milan seems to be responding accordingly. The improved areas will define new neighborhoods and regions, while providing secondary city centers, an idea touched upon by laN+’s Luca Galaforò this summer in Rome. “It’s not a suburban area, it’s very close to the center, but the idea just to create outside of the historical center a new center, [is] really very interesting.” (Galaforò, 2006) This thinking looks to be shifting Italian cities for the better, taking much-needed pressure off the centros and duomo squares, without creating more suburban sprawl.

What is very clear from all of this is that a new Milan is emerging, a Milan that can and will respond to the increased demand for usable public space and functional public buildings across the whole city, not just limited to one specific area. While we are yet to see how successful the projects are in actual use, the effort put in to transform and post-modernize the city will undoubtedly result in a positive change. This new Milan exists to remind people of what the core roots of Milan as a city are, how powerful an innovative city it can be, and how adaptive it is to the needs of everyday urban life. With a city that can contain a series of secondary and even tertiary city centers, new subcultures and trends can arise in one area that can exist independently of the rest of the city. Stefano Boeri stated that a true European city is growing by building on itself. “If there is something [important] in the European city DNA, it is that the new is always an addition or superimposition to what is still there. It’s a city which is growing on itself, adding the new but never totally canceling what [was] there first” (Boeri, 2006) Furthermore, Cino Zucchi, who we interviewed this year in Milan, added “the layers of the historical city are so strong, especially in Italy I think, that you are ... not the first or the last one to act on the city, So, this idea of layers where you always operate on a text that’s already existing, you add something on, like in a collective artifact, it changes your point-of-view because you see yourself as something that [has] to interpret something else. You are not responsible for the whole process, so, I think this is interesting; the idea that you belong to it” (Zucchi, 2006) Perhaps Li Edelkoort, head of Design Academy Eindhoven, puts it best, describing what appears to be underway in the European city at this time: “It’s a period of editing and updating things.” (Edelkoort, 2006) In this respect, Milan seems to be taking the right approach and evolving their rich urban landscape, as it shifts its economy to sustain its innovation.

Nuovo Milano development map

- 1 Nuovo Fiera Polo
Massimiliano Fuksas
- 2 Train Station Upgrades: Stazioni Centrale, Repubblica, Porta Venezia
Angelo Mangiarotti, Marco Tamino
- 3 Nuovo Sede della Regione Lombardia
Pei Cobb Freed & Partners
- 4 Pirelli Tower Restauration
Renato Sarno Group
- 5 Progetto CityLife
Daniel Libeskind, Zaha Hadid, Arata Isozaki
- 6 La Città della Moda
Cesar Pelli, Fred W. Clarke, Gregg E. Jones, Robert Narracci

- New Development
- Train Station
- - - Railway
- Milano Ring Road
- Freeway



Bibliography

Quotes from our interviews are noted by name and are dated. This paper uses quotes from the following interviewees:

Stefano Boeri, Domus Chief Editor

Massimiliano Fuksas, M Fuksas Arch

Luca Galaforo, laN+

Michele Rossi, Park Associati Architetti

Cino Zucchi, Zucchi Architetti

These quotes and related ones can be further explored in the interview section of the ItaliaDesign field school site. Each interview has specific quotes and video clips that were chosen for their relevance to the ItaliaDesign project.

<http://www.sfu.ca/italiadesign>

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Edelkoort, Li (2006) Three Days in the Netherlands

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