

An Italian Masterpiece



IL CENTRO, ARESE IS NOT ONLY THE LARGEST SHOPPING CENTRE IN ITALY BUT ONE OF THE MOST INNOVATIVE RETAIL DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPE, JAYNE RAFTER, PUBLISHER OF RLI PAYS IT A VISIT...

One of my highlights of this year's ICSC European Conference was a visit to this Extraordinary piece of Architecture in an area that has experienced the legendary names of its industrial history, Il Centro Arese is set to become the most prestigious commercial facility in Northern Italy and rightly so.

It started with a vision back in the 90's when the Italian hypermarket giant and mall developer Finiper purchased the former site of Alfa Romeo – one of the Country's most admired motorcar brands. The site set the scene for what has finally become reality, one of the most avant-gard pieces of architecture in Europe and the largest shopping centre in Italy with 200 shops and over 92,000 square meters of GLA, designed by award-winning architectural firm Design International.

Conveniently-located on the North West

corner of Milan, between Malpensa airport, lake Maggiore, lake Como and Switzerland, IL CENTRO Shopping Centre is situated in Arese in the Italian region of Lombardy, about 12 kilometres from Milan and is estimated to attract over 15 million visitors in the first year of operations and is set to become a new benchmark within the retail real estate industry. This is no tall fete with 100,000 visitors on the first day and a 10km tailback to get there it's already a milestone in the making.

In June 2014 Marco Brunelli, the Patron and Founder of Finiper, appointed Davide Padoa, Principal Architect and CEO of Design International, to review both the architectural and the commercial positioning of the ambitious development this was embarked upon with immense pride and passion as it emerged that Davide was born and raised in Arese and this was

a wonderful opportunity to remain part of its heritage.

The Mall oozes charm and sophistication with its plethora of Palazzos an ingenious concept where single shops are treated like stand-alone buildings within the shopping centre main building, and integrated in its innovatively designed tree-lined streets, squares, grand staircases, and recreational areas. It has already become a meeting place with an abundance of restaurants and cafes to relax, catch up with friends and take in the ambience of the centre, I only wish I had had the time to experience it.

Designed with a great diversity of site-lines the shops are the ultimate focal point, all of which arouse curiosity, emotions and, above all, stimulate a fantastic shopping and entertainment experience.

IL CENTRO features a Fashion Court, inspired by London's Covent Garden, which





is home to some of the most important international brands, including the first Primark in Italy (7,000 sqm on two levels), H&M, Zara, Massimo Dutti, Superdry, and MAC, to name but a few. Flagship jewellery stores Swarovski and Bottega del Regalo strikingly catch the eye as they appear in their dedicated Palazzos.

My favourite part... Iper la Grande has been transformed into an innovative Market Place where fresh products of the hypermarket are brought into the mall in permanent kiosks where guests can experience live cooking shows, consume in situ or carry away freshly made meals. This is no ordinary Market Place, it outshines all others with a pinnacle of creativity and has to be seen to be believed. I could honestly spend a full day food shopping in this amazing place. A ramp resembling that of the Guggenheim Museum in New York transcends customers from the ground floor to a large restaurants' court on

the first floor ... only this time food and taste are the arts on display, how many shopping centres can boast their own brewery on site?

Tall trees enrich the retail streets both outside and inside, creating a real garden with kiosks and restaurants, bike trails, children's games and other activities related to sport and health. IL CENTRO also has a Medical Centre managed by Humanitas and a garden centre... is there anything it doesn't have?

Davide Padoa shares his dedication: "IL CENTRO has transformed the old site of Alfa Romeo from a factory of cars to a factory of experiences, with the largest number of brands ever realised in Italy within a new, larger, porous generation of Malls, where indoor and outdoor spaces live in synchrony. Drawing IL CENTRO was like painting a town, with the habits and tastes of its citizens in mind." Truly a centre that epitomises the future of retail.

