

MILAN. WORKS IN PROGRESS AT THE NEW RHO FAIRGROUNDS

Fiera Milano: Architecture and Infrastructures to Refurbish the Landscape

The new hotels at Porta Sud, the railway station, a complex system of road connections, a building for the offices: these are the great initiatives of the first Italian exhibition venue

by **Lorenzo Paparo**

In recent years, the landscape of the north-west of the city of Milan has changed radically, and Fiera Milano has without doubt played a key role in that change. The first stage was the construction of the major new exhibition complex at Milan-Rho, an ambitious project that was completed successfully despite the difficulties and scepticism surrounding its launch.

The new Fiera attracted some of the most important architects in the world. As is already well known, Massimiliano Fuksas designed the exhibition complex and Mario Bellini designed the multi-storey car parks. But there are some other important initiatives, some of which are already taking shape and others that will be starting soon. And once everything is finished, an area that just a few years ago was a symbol of post-industrial degradation will have been transformed into an "architecture park".

The hotels

After just twenty months' work, the two "leaning" towers designed by Dominique Perrault have been completed, and will be home to the hotels of fieramilano Rho. Located near to the south gate and just a few hundred metres from the pavilions, the hotels will be run by NH Hoteles and will be opening next spring, providing 400 rooms (currently being fitted out) and accommodation for 800 guests.

They can be identified from afar by their five-degree inclination, with the taller tower leaning towards fieramilano and the shorter tower leaning towards the city, and shining black façades, made of 20,000 cavity-ventilated sheets of glass, used for the first time in Europe and designed to reduce heat loss.

The infrastructures

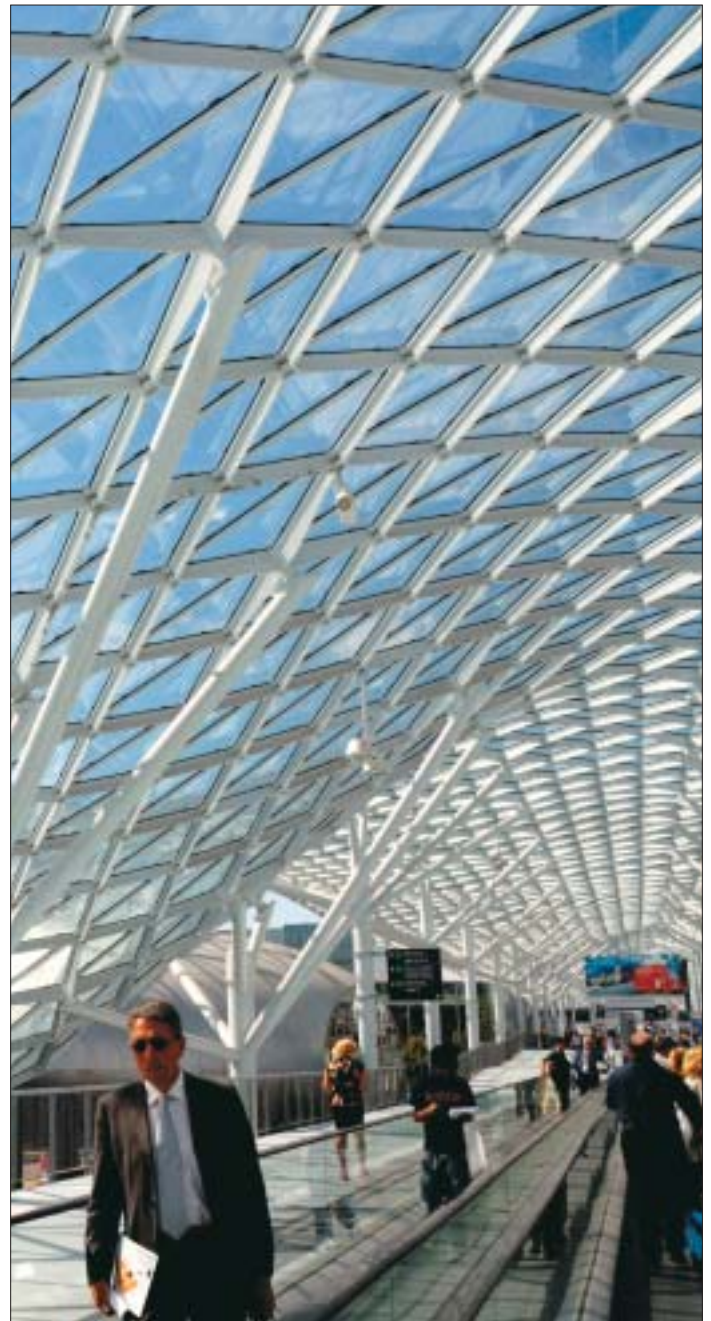
The railway station is located on the opposite side of the exhibition complex, a short walk from the hotels along the underground pedestrian walkway, and will be opened for use in the coming months, after the official unveiling at the Artigiano in Fiera show in early December. The station is served by local Milan trains, acting as a second metro line, and it proved to be extremely useful handling the large number of visitors to Artigiano in Fiera.

But the station is not only served by local trains destined for Domodossola, Varese and Luino: for major exhibitions, trains on the Milan-Turin line and the high-speed line to Turin and France, whose tracks run parallel to the ordinary line, will also be stopping at the station. This greatly enhances the rail connections between Fiera, the city and the national and international networks, and is the first concrete mobility measure taken with a view to Expo 2015.

The railway connection comes on top of a complex system of road connections that links Fiera Milano with the city and the rest of Europe, a system that is almost complete. The latest major projects were the opening of the tunnel under the Simplon Route, and of the link from Fiera to the A4 for Venice-bound traffic. The work undertaken by the companies Autostrade per l'Italia (intersection between fieramilano link and Milan-Lakes) and SATAP (link to Milan-Turin) is essentially finished, with only some finishing work on the western bypass remaining, to be completed.

The new offices

In addition to all of this, 2010 will see completion of the build-



ing for employees of the Fiera Milano group, a single complex located near to the east gate comprising two thirteen-storey buildings rising to a height of just under fifty metres and finished with smoked grey glass.

The project is being run by Studio 5+1 AA and Jean Baptiste Pietri.

Finally, the whole will be surrounded by a large, public green space designed by Andreas Kipar. ■