

GALLERIE D'ITALIA – NAPLES

The project by AMDL CIRCLE and Michele De Lucchi

A part of the historic headquarters of the Banco di Napoli is transformed into an art pole, with itineraries stretching from Magna Graecia to the contemporary world.

The intervention for the new headquarters of Gallerie d'Italia – Naples respects the identity and the architectural plan of the building, discreetly integrating the technology necessary for the transversality of the artists' expressive languages. The collection finds a new arrangement among the rooms of classical taste designed by Marcello Piacentini in the 1930s. The project offers the opportunity to proclaim the museum's role as a place of culture, entertainment, meeting and social interaction in the heart in Naples.

Brass and wood for a new story. The passage between the urban space and the museum environment is entrusted to the brass covering of the flight of steps at the front, which emphasises the entrance. The colour contrast with the stone of the façade brings out the monumental proportions of the building and introduces visitors to the atmosphere of the museum, where the conservation of marble, stucco and historical wood is in dialogue with new materials. In particular, walnut wood is used for the floors, doors and window frames and the new furnishings. A 25-metre bridge, this too covered in brass, crosses the internal courtyard and connects the two exhibition poles of the building. The slight curvature of the bridge conceals the point of arrival and generates curiosity in visitors. Integrated and suffused lights showcase the design with vertical staves of the brass-covered walls and underline the quality of the texture of the finish.

The entrance as a stage. The museum is accessed from Via Toledo through a large foyer, clearly visible from the exterior thanks to glazed portals. The space is designed as a showcase for an initial dialogue with the city, where masterpieces from the collections of organisations and museums with which Gallerie d'Italia have relationships of exchange and collaboration are hosted on a cyclical basis. The museum is inaugurated with a symbolic exhibition of the Farnese Atlas, on loan from the National Archaeological Museum of Naples, which for the occasion also seems to support the aerial sculpture made of wooden shingles designed by the Circle. After crossing the foyer, through three large openings you access the reception area and bookshop, with furnishings built based on designs and made of walnut wood. The column bookshelves on wheels allow full use of all four sides and can be moved around the environment. The counter for displaying books makes new use of red marble panels, originally by Piacentini, set together in a single large walnut top.

The hall for temporary displays: monumental and flexible. Temporary exhibitions find space in the triple-height hall measuring 1,000 square metres, where the bank used to meet its customers, as evidenced by the presence of an original counter. The space is transformed into an avant-garde stage for contemporary art thanks to the metal stage machine suspended inside the skylight, which makes the room flexible and functional to welcome exhibitions, performances, concerts and special events. The structure in fact contains all the technologies necessary to meet the changing layout design requirements. The large room can welcome many visitors at the same time, favouring the meeting between Museum, Art and visitors. For the inauguration of the museum, the hall welcomes the "Restitutions" exhibition, where works recently restored are displayed in a layout amid the interiors, exteriors and courtyards of an imaginative village of little houses made of wood and light fabric that plays on the transparencies and colours of the works.

The excitement of arriving at Caravaggio. The route to arrive at the masterpiece of the collections, the *Martyrdom of Saint Ursula* by Caravaggio, develops in an emotional crescendo through the various spaces: from the hall of temporary displays you cross the brass bridge to reach a staircase, devised as wood to confer warmth and intimacy, which leads to a small room in an older wing with a succession of rooms along the side running along Via San Giacomo. The surprise is finding yourself before a small opening that reveals Caravaggio's last masterpiece, in a special and unusual perspective that is preparation for contemplation in the next room. Here the painting is there to be admired in all its tragic beauty. The grey colour of the walls has been chosen so as not to influence the perception of the artist's colours. The special lighting, as indeed that of the entire Museum, has been handled by the studio Ferrara Palladino Lightscape.

A visual telescope for Neapolitan Vedutismo. The wing on Via San Giacomo has been restructured to retrieve the original structure, characterised by the perspective suite of the rooms. The spaces are covered with colourful false walls that house the technical installations and display the works. Panelling around the French windows conceals the cabling systems and gives shielding from the external light to create the optimum climatic and light conditions for the conservation of artworks. The colours have been chosen by the curator, Prof. Fernando Mazzocca, to be in tune with the shades characteristic of the various periods.

The ancient in dialogue with the contemporary. On the second floor of the building we discover the extensive collection of vases from Attica and Magna Graecia, while a selection of works from the 20th and 21st century is located in the part facing onto Via Toledo. Positioned inside the room where the ceramics are on display, historically covered in marble, are three types of glass display cases: monumental display cases conceived as flexible spaces capable of being adapted to suit different exhibition layouts, the first of which presents the works of the National Archaeological Museum of Naples; small cases to showcase individual precious objects; finally, cupboards inspired by the exhibiting methods of the Wunderkammer, which contain most of the vases. The visit continues into the rooms devoted to the layouts for contemporary works, curated by Luca Massimo Barbero, which are covered with white panelling to create neutral environments, ideal for welcoming the diversity of artistic expressions. The restoration of the wooden floor mirrors Piacentini's geometrical design.

The library and teaching laboratories enrich the museum experience. At the end of the route are the library, with its walls lined with walnut wood shelves, and three teaching laboratories fitted with a tiered seating attached to the wall in front of a multimedia panel. Woodwork runs along the perimeter of the laboratories to create a board to welcome the materials produced and the iconographic inspirations. The interwoven wood aerial sculptures, designed by Produzione Privata, the experimental design laboratory run by Circle, mask the false ceiling and create a more intimate and welcoming environment to favour creativity.

The cafeteria on Via Toledo. From the large exit staircase you reach the cafeteria-bistro on the ground floor, which is a pleasant environment for social interaction, with walnut wood and brass furnishings made to design. Three raised stages create discreet and more intimate corners and allow the high windows looking out onto Via Toledo to be enjoyed. The cafeteria-bistro is the informal space for socialisation that completes the project and makes the new museum a genuine place of entertainment in the heart of the city.

About AMDL CIRCLE

AMDL CIRCLE is a multifaceted studio that was founded by Michele De Lucchi. Internationally renowned for its humanistic approach, it works across many sectors providing its clients with expressive and strategic projects that embrace architecture, interiors, products and communication. AMDL's team of architects, designers and craftspeople have worked on projects for public and private organisations, collaborating with large corporations such as Intesa Sanpaolo, Deutsche Bank and UniCredit, and designing buildings and exhibition systems for Neues Museum in Berlin and the Gallerie d'Italia in Milan, Turin and Naples. The Milan based studio has also designed spaces, products and furniture for Alessi, Artemide, Cassina, Hermès, Poltrona Frau and Unifor.

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