

PIUARCH

ORTO FRA I CORTILI, PIUARCH HEADQUARTERS, MILANO

In the heart of Milan's Brera district, "Orto fra i cortili" is the rooftop garden that puts people and community wellbeing at the centre.

Implemented in 2015, *Orto fra i cortili* is fruit of an idea by the architectural firm Piuarch, in collaboration with landscape designer Cornelius Gavril. Situated in the heart of the Brera district in Milan, the project has transformed the 300 square metre rooftop of the building where the firm has its premises, in Via Palermo 1, into a permanent vegetable garden, with a consequent upgrade in terms of energy saving and functionality.

At the heart of this concept lies the idea of a system that uses recycled materials such as wood pallets to build structures easily and cheaply, in a way that combines aesthetic appeal with functionality. The pallets are used both as decking and as containers for soil when turned upside down. In this way, the layout of the vegetable garden is constructed using a single element. The modular and repetitive nature of pallets enables them to be adapted easily to various spatial dimensions, making the project accessible and sustainable.

Not only does *Orto fra i cortili* improve the building structure with an upgrade in terms of energy consumption, but also acts as a landscape element, by promoting the biodiversity of plants and insects in an urban environment; it also performs a decorative function by improving the appearance of a space that was previously left totally idle, with benefits not only for its direct users but also for those looking out onto the garden; local food production: the products grown in the garden are in fact freshly picked and consumed at mealtimes by the firm's staff and any surpluses are shared out among the participants, thus promoting the circular economy and a "short supply chain".

As well as providing a corporate space for socialization, coworking, and welcoming guests, the area has also been conceived as a meeting place, open to the community and schools for events and activities.

Right from the start, the project has not only been intended as a one-off experience, but a possible model for replication, aimed at furthering the redevelopment of other unused or interstitial urban areas, with benefits in terms of sustainability and urban socialization.

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Concept and Architectural Project:

Piuarch

Landscape Design:

Cornelius Gavril

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Founded in Milan in 1996, Piuarch is an architecture and urban planning firm, a group of international professionals in which different backgrounds, identities, and skills merge. Piuarch delivers an architectural concept that is contemporary yet deeply rooted in its surroundings, with respect for current and future planetary resources. Activities range from the design of office buildings to retail and hospitality premises, with forays into the development of residential complexes, urban renewal, and regeneration projects. The firm's primary objective is the planning of quality urban contexts and community spaces which, through new concepts of usage and shared functions, may stimulate renewed forms of civil co-existence.

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