



Più di un museo,
più di una fabbrica

More Than a Museum,
More Than a Factory

LABICS: MARIA CLAUDIA CLEMENTE,
FRANCESCO ISIDORI

MAST Bologna – Manifattura di Arte,
Sperimentazione e Tecnologia, Bologna

MAST Bologna – Manufacture of Arts,
Experimentation and Technology, Bologna

✍ LUKA SKANSI 📷 CHRISTIAN RICHTERS



L'edificio polifunzionale MAST di Bologna rappresenta un raro esempio, nell'Italia di oggi, di incontro tra mondo imprenditoriale e cultura architettonica.

The MAST Bologna multipurpose centre is one of the rare examples in present-day Italy where entrepreneurship and architectural culture meet. ↗ 76



The recently completed MAST building (the acronym stands for Manifattura di Arti, Sperimentazione e Tecnologia di Bologna – the Bologna Manufacture of Arts, Experimentation and Technology) is one of those projects that architects dream of completing at least once in their professional career. The project was commissioned by an illustrious client – a blooming company (G. D. – Coesia Group) and a world leader in packaging technologies, directed by an enlightened female entrepreneur known for her charity and cultural involvement. Isabella Seragnoli is a philanthropic entrepreneur who has supported various hospital projects, but she is also an art collector with a particular interest in industrial photography documenting labour, industry and industry-related spaces. She has collected an impressive number of works, which provide a genuine overview of the history of 20th century photography, ranging from the Russian and American avant-gardes of the 1920s to masterpieces by Andreas Gursky and David Goldblatt. In line

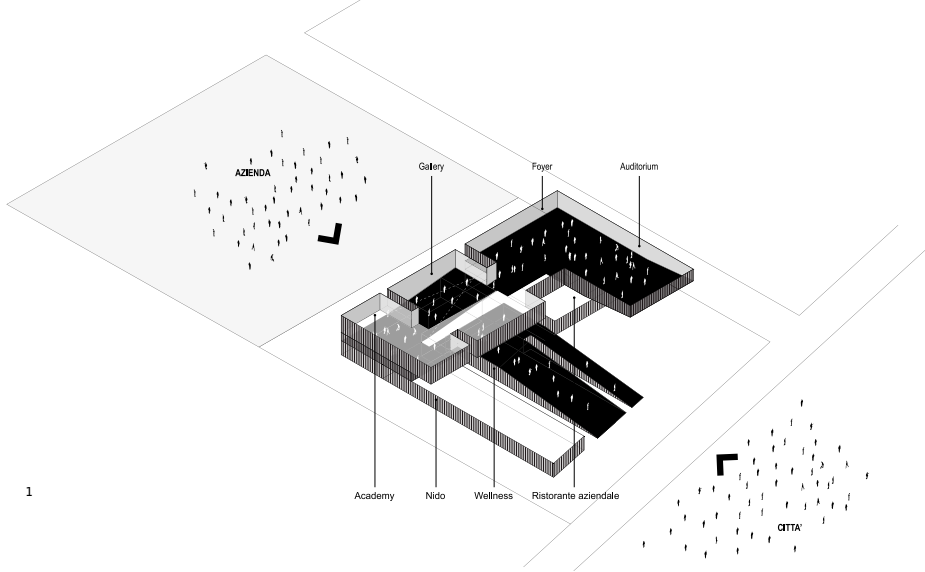
with the entrepreneur's passion for art, MAST Bologna has also been conceived as an exhibition centre where art collections owned by the company, as well as modern art and photography exhibitions, can be displayed.

The building was designed with the intention of opening the factory towards the city. The MAST Bologna building is the company's public showroom, which is why some of its parts have been created to host presentations of the technologies in which G. D. excels. At the same time, the building offers new collective spaces for company employees and managers, such as areas for professional education and training, a company restaurant and cafeteria, recreational facilities and a nursery. The diversity of functions dictates versatile solutions with specific spatial and dimensional traits, as well as with different relations with the exterior space.

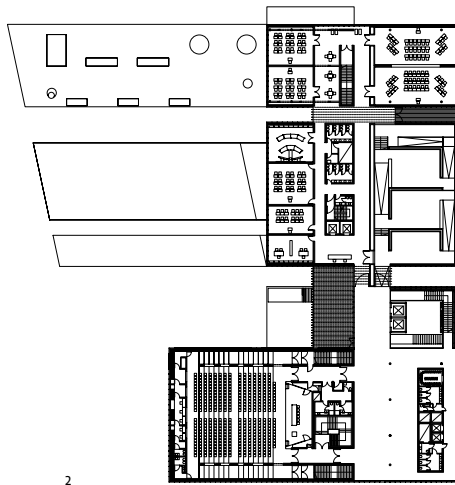
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while also expressing the desire to open the factory to the city; the project provides yet another professional stimulus: creating a building that can house such heterogeneous functions, creating a coherent physical space with a difficult, albeit not new, architectural type – a multipurpose building bringing together culture, exposition, recreation, training and education (for employees, engineers and children). The architects were given a task that was not taken for granted and was perceived as most appealing: to introduce order and create a shape for the inherent complexity of the building, while conferring an image suitable to the client and responding to the needs of different working spaces.

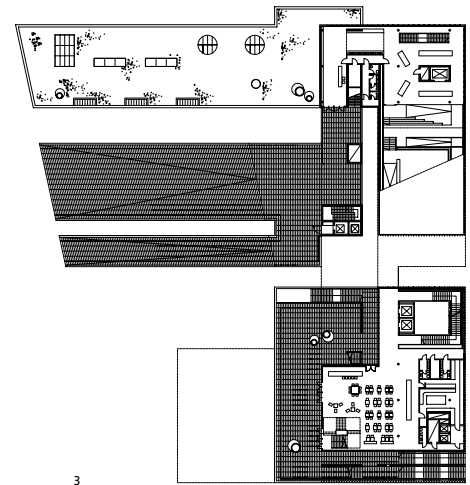
In a time of exacerbating crisis experienced by Italian architecture, such a happy marriage between entrepreneurship and design is rather an exception to the rule. The crisis has not only resulted from the current economic crisis, it is also related to administrative and bureaucratic difficulties associated with tenders and construction sites, and linked to entrenched corruption in the building sector, as



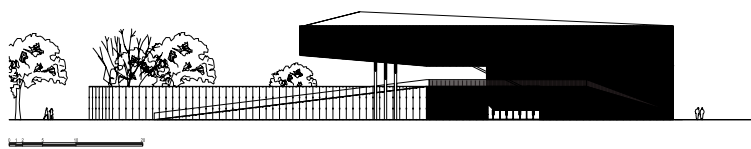
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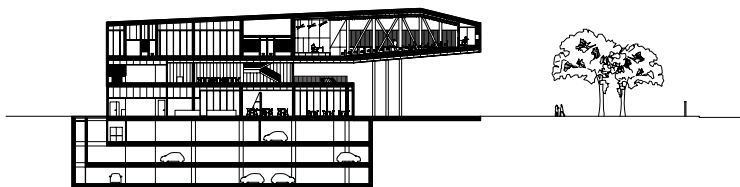
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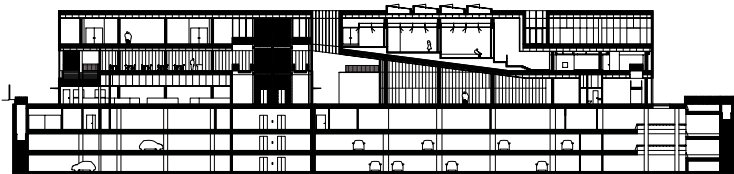
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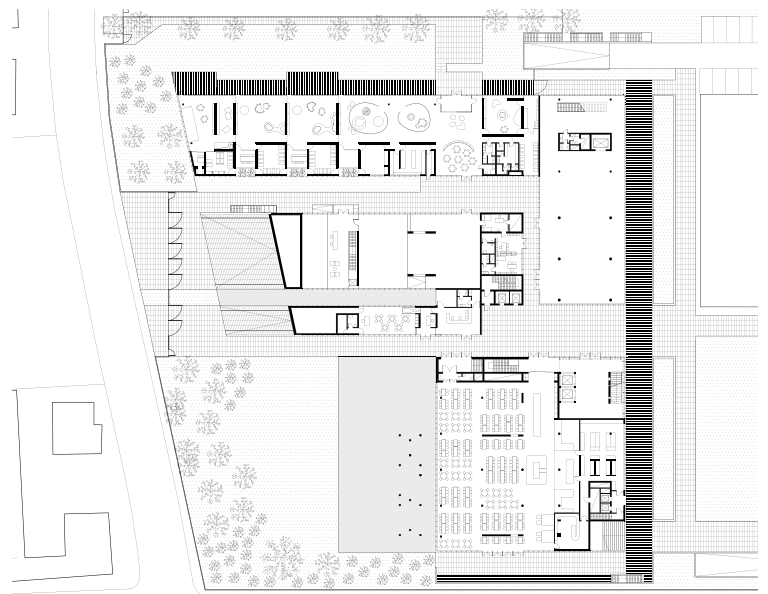
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5



6

- 1 Schema edificio percorso
 - 2 Piano secondo
 - 3 Piano primo
 - 4 Prospetto Sud Ovest
 - 5 Sezioni
 - 6 Piano terra
- 1 Concept design
 - 2 Second floor plan
 - 3 First floor plan
 - 4 South-West façade
 - 5 Sections
 - 6 Ground floor plan

MAST Bologna - Manifattura di Arte, Sperimentazione e Tecnologia, Bologna, Italia

MAST Bologna - Manufacture of Arts, Experimentation and Technology, Bologna, Italy

PROGETTISTI DESIGN

Labics (Maria Claudia Clemente, Francesco Isidori)

CLIENTE CLIENT

Coesia Group

TEAM DEL CONCORSO COMPETITION TEAM

Hélène Bouchain, Leonardo Consolazione, Andrea Ottaviani, Giorgio Pasqualini

SVILUPPO DEL PROGETTO DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Chiara Capriulo (Project Architect), Carolina Bajetti, Leonardo Consolazione, Francesca Delicato, Giuditta Milano, Andrea Ottaviani, Luigi Panetta, Dominique Réthans, Maria Adele Savioli, Elisa Villani

PROGRAMMA PROGRAMME

Asilo nido, mensa, centro espositivo, spazio per esposizioni, accademia, auditorium, a caffetteria, parking / Nursery, canteen, exposition centre, exposition gallery, training centre, auditorium, cafeteria, parking

CRONOLOGIA PROGETTO PROJECT CHRONOLOGY

2006-2013

AREA TOTALE TOTAL AREA

25 000 m²

SUPERFICIE NETTA DI PAVIMENTO NET FLOOR AREA

7 200 m²

COSTARE COST

25.000.000 €

MODELLI MODEL

Susan Berardo, Gaia Maria Lombardo

PROGETTAZIONE STRUTTURALE STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT

Proges Engineering Andrea Imbrenda

PROGETTAZIONE MECCANICA E INGEGNERIA ELETTRICA MECHANICAL AND ELECTRICAL CONSULTANT

Hilson Moran

ILLUMINAZIONE LIGHTING

Baldieri S.r.l.

ACUSTICA ACOUSTICS

Higini Arau

PAESAGGIO LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Paolo Pejrone



well as to the obsolete organisation of architectural studies and a profound crisis that has crushed potential clients (in both the private and public sectors). This chronic deadlock has led to a scarcity of demand for quality architecture. Against such a background, MAST Bologna can be seen as an alien building, catapulted from a more advanced European country to the arid outskirts of an Italian city.

The building's complex image, as well as the quality of its production and completion, are a rarity in the current economic and professional situation. And yet, MAST is not at all decontextualised from Italian industrial culture. Those who can rise above observation of phenomena in the present moment will be able to see that the spirit that gave birth to this project matches the entrepreneurial spirit permeating Italian industry in the 1950s and 1960s, with Olivetti as the unbeatable role model of investment in quality working spaces and life inside and outside their factory. True, MAST Bologna does not have the same proportions and size of Olivetti, but it revives, albeit on a smaller scale, the Italian vision of undertakings that value a multitude of professions and individuals working together, a vision that does not see a place of work merely as a production facility, and a vision that has, sadly, disappeared over the past decades.

The centre has been designed by emerging architects from the Rome-based Labics Studio (Maria Claudia Clemente and Francesco Isidori), who were awarded the commission in a closed tender to which seven other teams

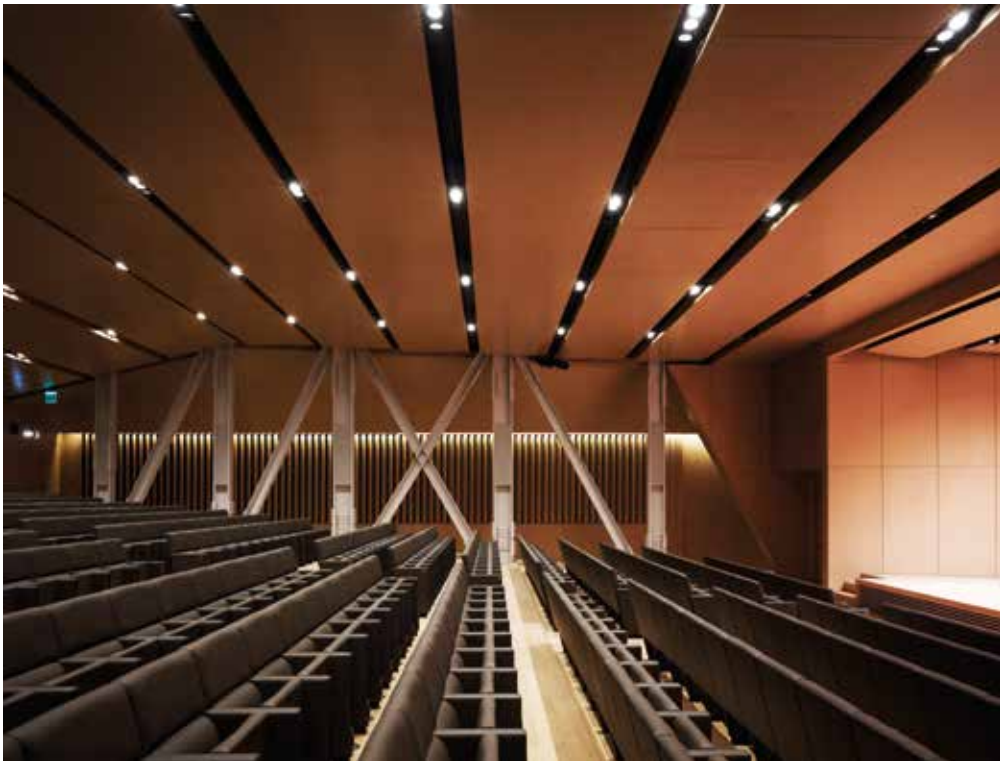
were invited. The Labics architects describe MAST as a city in a building. Although slightly out of place, their metaphor is very efficient, as it shows how the architects thought of solving the internal organisation of the functional demands imposed on the building by the client. Their vision is that of a part of a city where various places dedicated to different functions are part of the architectural flow, with spaces that are either in relation with each other or, occasionally, isolated from each other. The Labics Studio conceived their design as a combination of two routes. The first follows the path employees take every day, while the second is used by a more general public on special occasions. The routes are arranged at different levels of the building. There are places where the routes meet and intersect, sometimes visually and sometimes physically.

The distinction between public and company use is quite visible from the outside as well. A wide ramp from the road to the entrance leads to the first level of the building – the ground floor for public use. From here, one can choose to walk to an auditorium, a training centre or exhibition galleries. These functions are contained in outward projections characterising the street-facing volume. The company route is below the public floor and visually directs its users towards open spaces, such as a large canteen overlooking an impressive sculpture by Mark di Suvero and a fountain pool from which pillars supporting the auditorium structure rise.

While the back of the building facing the production facilities and

managerial headquarters is volumetrically flat, the front of the building facing the city articulates space differently, breathing soul into the anonymous quarter in the western outskirts of the city of Bologna, constructed during the urban sprawl after the Second World War. The main ramp allowing the general public access to the building also promises a future physical connection with the adjacent Reno River Park. For the time being, this connection still has to be seen with the mind's eye, as the area between the river and MAST still needs to undergo certain urban development measures. The building situated on the outskirts of the city of Bologna might seem out of proportions, but this effect is mitigated by a series of volumetric and material tricks of the trade. The ramp conceals the ground floor, which otherwise would have been visible from the street, thus visually diminishing the impact the volumes would have made. The façade coating was chosen to obtain the same effect. Serigraph-glass panel cladding covers the opaque walls with aluminium lamellae, softening the building and neutralising its tectonics.

The small body of the nursery next to MAST is the only variation to the general make-up of the façade. The low boxy structure facing a pre-existing school is covered by a series of colour clay rods inserted in steel poles forming a rhythmic façade preventing a view of the children-dedicated area to the outside world. The nursery, on the other hand, illuminated, inter alia, with zenithal light, offers a view of the adjacent green area. ☺





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