



Ice, hidden treasures and new ideas for
a better future

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Photo Alan Maglio

Pizza embarks on a voyage of discovery to a historical place in Milan: the Palazzo del Ghiaccio (Ice Palace) and the former Frigoriferi Milanesi which, from being the city’s ice-house and ice-skaters’ paradise, became with the Open Care company an important centre of attraction for everything that has to do with art and culture. This historic building hides the most cutting-edge restoration workshops, artists’ and designers’ studios, fantastic spaces for exhibitions and cultural events, and a maze of vaults that house treasures belonging to private individuals and foundations. The exclusive images of Alan Maglio and the narration of Francesco Cataluccio - Frigoriferi Milanesi’s curation project manager, and of Antonella Crippa - Open Care’s scientific manager, accompany us on this journey.

What is the history of this place?
Francesco Cataluccio: It first opened in 1899 as a supporting structure to the Milanese agro-alimentary supply system. It is strongly linked to the city’s “nutritional” activity: it was a big ice factory for Milan’s vegetable market, which is still located nearby. The tracks of the Porta Vittoria station passed underneath it. Frigoriferi Milanesi produced the ice to preserve foodstuffs; in the basement were big refrigerated storage rooms used for keeping food. The ice was also loaded on the wagons that delivered goods outside of the city. Then in 1923 the machines that had been acquired for ice-production were used to create what at the time was the biggest indoor ice rink in Europe, which was constructed next to the main building and remained operational until 2002. Until the 50’s this was what Frigoriferi Milanesi was about, but afterwards, when home refrigerators became common, the place underwent several transformations: initially a big egg warehouse (thus keeping a link to the vegetable market) and then from the 70’s it became a warehouse for furs and rugs, and so the big underground refrigerators were turned into vaults for the safekeeping of artworks and valuables.

How did it change throughout the years?
FC: We are talking about a building that is over a hundred years old, initially dedicated to the production of ice for food preservation, then turned into safe storage for precious objects, and finally a location that hosts artistic and cultural activities. Following the restoration of the complex by the Genoese studio “5+1 Architetti Associati”, the shape of the building changed drastically. Two years ago, alongside the many activities related to art and the Bastogi head office (owners of the building), Frigoriferi Milanesi became a place of art workshops, galleries (including Kolima Contemporary Culture which is also Nicolai Lilin’s Siberian tattoo studio), architecture and design studios (including Viapiranesi, directed by Luca Molinari and Anna Barbara), two psychotherapy schools, one restaurant, a communication agency and Greenpeace. In addition, it is the Milanese office of Slow Food Italia and the rehearsal venue of the Carisch Orchestra. The activities are many and varied, but that’s why we believe they can launch this place into the future.



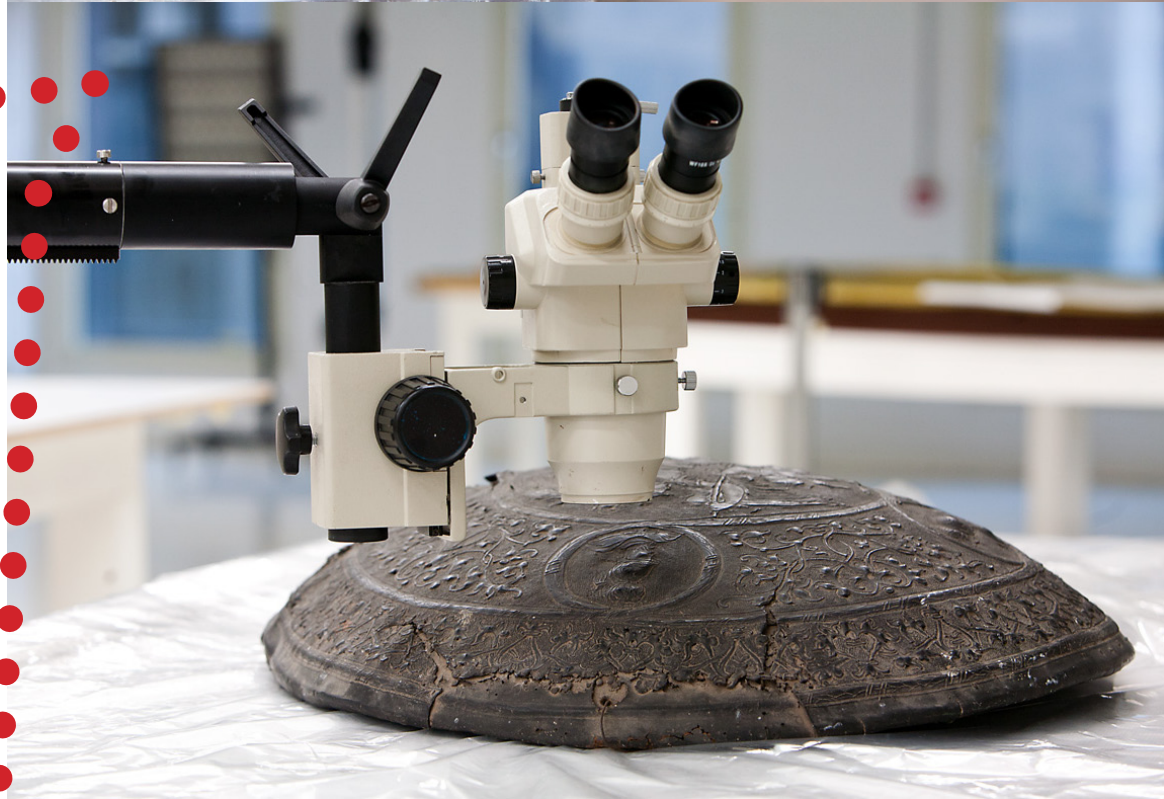
We are convinced that many realities working under one roof will contribute to the development of new ideas and original projects.

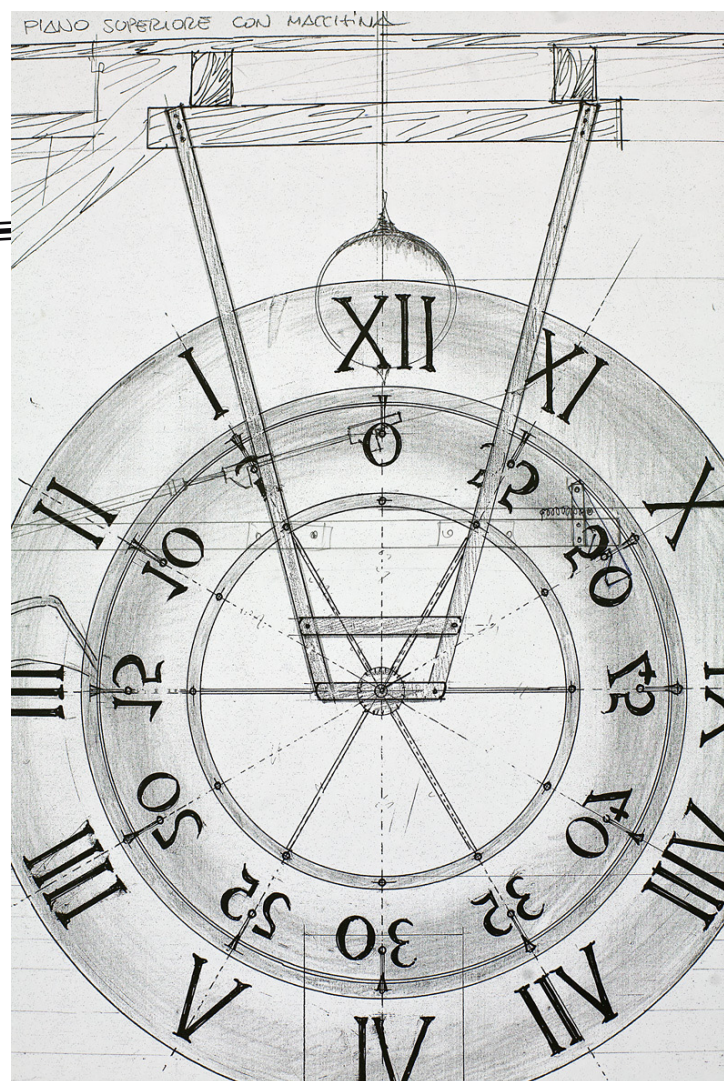
What will it become?
FC: Frigoriferi Milanesi is a unique reality in Italy. Firstly, because this is a place of preservation and production at the same time. A lively venue where many cultural activities can be organized and hosted, such as concerts, book launches and documentary screenings, art exhibitions and conventions. We would like this to become a place where new ideas for the future are generated, and this is truly possible if you don’t specialize in just one sector. In our opinion, Italy is incomparable worldwide in two fields, and these are what we must bet on: one is art and culture, and the other is food. The future of this country lies in these two areas. The big challenge that awaits us is precisely that of investing on these sectors so that they can express their full potential (something which, unfortunately, up to now has been done too little). Frigoriferi Milanesi, in its small way, can be a laboratory where paths can be taken in this direction. Bastogi and Brioschi Sviluppo Immobiliare, companies that are part of the Cabassi Group, invest in this project because they believe that construction, today, means imagining and designing places with a strong aesthetic and cultural imprint, where the quality of life and work is better.

Open Care. What does it do?
Antonella Crippa: Open Care is a company created for the collectors’ needs, that operates in four areas in the field of art services. We provide custody of artworks in a very large vault (8000 sqm) where we keep paintings, sculptures, photographs, documents, jewels and art objects. We have a conservation and restoration department to take care of painted surfaces and pieces made of many different materials like contemporary artworks, wooden furniture, frames, rugs, tapestries, textiles and ancient scientific instruments such as astrolabes, telescopes, clocks and instruments for temperature measurement. We operate in the transportation field, moving both single artworks and entire collections. Also, we provide consulting services. In particular, our art consulting department finds ways to value our clients’ goods: some people need to understand what it is that they own, others would like to sell or buy new pieces or are interested in creating small exhibitions from their collections. To sum up, this is Open Care: the intention is for individuals, institutions and companies that are responsible for an artwork or a collection to have one single partner for everything that is required for the conservation and valorization of art objects.

Is Open Care a unique reality in Italy?
AC: Open Care is a leader in the field of art services.

What excellences have passed through Frigoriferi Milanesi and Open Care in these years?
AC: In the restoration field, Open Care has had the opportunity to take care of truly important items such as Giovanni Bellini’s







Sacra Conversazione Dolfin (Dolfin Sacred Conversation) - located in Venice - or the clothing collection of the Civic Art Collections of the Castello Sforzesco in Milan. We have contributed to the transportation and set-up of exhibitions such as Paul McCarthy at Palazzo Citterio (for the Trussardi Foundation), Arnaldo Pomodoro at the Marlborough Gallery in New York and Bruno Munari at Rotonda della Besana; we curated an exhibition of the Olivetti collection for the Telecom Italia company. Among our clients are people who own and preserve great patrimonies; I am thinking of FAI (Fondo Ambiente Italiano - Italian Environmental Foundation) that entrusted us the restoration of the furniture of Villa Necchi Campiglio, a jewel of the Milanese architecture of the 1930's. I am also thinking of the restoration of Napoleon Bonaparte's coronation cape (now in the Risorgimento Museum in Milan), of Bacco e Arianna by Sebastiano Ricci, of a fragment of Tabriz's "Hunting Rug" in the Poldi Pozzoli museum in Milan. Amongst others: the Pirelli Company's affiches and the clothing patrimony of the Maison Mila Schön, the scientific editing of the artwork inventory for the Cariplo Foundation Collection - published online and today available to anyone who wishes to study the Foundation's patrimony - and finally, the charity auction organized for the High Commission for Refugees, the UNHCR.

FC: The cultural activity of Frigoriferi is quite recent, but taking advantage of the splendid location of the Palazzo del Ghiaccio and the newly restructured spaces, we have organized concerts and meetings that would be too long to list here. Amongst the recent ones, a piano concert by Edna Stern, a great Belgian-Israeli pianist who played in the big glass and steel vault from the 1920's. Our excellences are linked to experimentation with these venues; we like to challenge them, as in the case of the theatre show Caino by the Val d'Oca Theatre with Danio Manfredini - a kind of medieval theatre. Or the Cesare Picco concert for which we hosted people like Mimmo Cuticchio and Marco Baliani, but also trade shows like So Critical So Fashion, and larger events such as the Communication Week and the Elephant Parade. In conclusion, all the realities hosted by Frigoriferi Milanesi are already examples of Italian excellence: one example above all is Slow Food.

