



Illuminating the heart of Milan: The UniCredit Pavilion

Client: UniCredit Pavilion, Milan / Italy
 Architecture: aMDL Architetto Michele De Lucchi Srl, Milan / Italy / www.amdl.it
 Lighting design: Gruppo C14, Alexander Bellman, Milan / Italy / www.gruppoc14.com
 Photography: Dirk Vogel, Dortmund / Germany
 Place: Milan
 Country: Italy

When lighting designers and architects work closely together, the result are structures that stand as emblems of excellence in spatial and urban design. The multifunctional pavilion, conceived by the Italian architect and designer Michele De Lucchi for UniCredit Bank and taking shape in close collaboration with the lighting experts of Gruppo C14 in Milan, today shines like a monumental lantern, lit from within. Illuminated with ERCO lighting tools, the structure's organic design made of wood and glass almost instantly evolved into a major attraction, encapsulating the poetic heart of Milan's new, prestigious Porta Nuova district.

Commencing in 2005, the urban development project north of Milan's historic centre has gradually transformed the area into a prominent district: today, the Zona Porta Nuova Garibaldi shows a new face, made of mirrored skyscrapers and high-tech office complexes that stand symbolic of Milan's leading role in banking and finance. The modern Torre UniCredit in Piazza Gae Aulenti reaches the lofty height of 218m, and as Italy's tallest building, dominates the

city skyline as a striking architectural feat. On the square adjacent to the mirrored tower, UniCredit also commissioned the studio of Michele De Lucchi with the design of a multifunctional pavilion to serve the bank as a venue for meetings and conferences, but also for public concerts, theatre performances or exhibitions.

In contrast to the cold, technical style of the neighbouring architecture, De Lucchi designed the pavilion occupying the centre of the square as an organic wooden building, its outline reminiscent of a pebble or seed. The formwork of vertical wooden ribs with horizontally arranged slats made of larch wood embraces a glazed core accommodating the auditorium on the ground floor, a versatile exhibition space on the mezzanine floor, and the "Greenhouse" Lounge under the curved roof. The structure as a whole gives the impression of a monumental lantern that, lit from within, creates a brilliant focal point on the new Piazza. Deliberately set against the surrounding high-tech compositions of steel and glass, the pavilion stands apart in its organic design and natural fabric, intensified by warm white light at 3000K to illuminate its interior and exterior.

Light and lighting as integral components of the architecture

In order to turn the idea of a highly visible and warmly lit wooden walk-in "lantern" into reality, client and architect agreed to bring the lighting experts of Gruppo C14 on board for the planning – studio founder Alexander Bellman had previously provided parts of the interior design as well as the lighting concept for the Torre UniCredit. Collaborating with Studio Michele de Lucchi, Alexander Bellman and his team developed construction details such as the flexible wooden shutters. The larch wood slats control and regulate the daylight illuminating the pavilion, darken the rooms for theatre performances or film showings, and protect sensitive exhibits from harmful UV rays. Further design features include recesses in the vertical girders outside the glass façade, hiding ERCO Grasshopper projectors from the view of the observer. "These powerful projectors with maintenance-free optoelectronics and pinpoint focus are recessed in the beams lining the top and bottom of the building shell," explains lighting designer Alexander Bellman. "Positioned on the outside between framework and glass front, they remain hidden from the view of the observer, whilst illuminating the façade with accent light directed up and down to create intersecting beams that give the building the impression of shining from within."

"The Spherolit lenses offer perfect visual control."

—Alexander Bellman, GruppoC14, Mailand

Efficient ERCO LED lighting tools for the pavilion façade and core

In addition to precision lighting for the façade, the decision was made to illuminate the wooden soffit of the interior with the efficient and innovative ERCO lighting tools. Lightboard recessed floodlights in 48W warm white are mounted in the side girders, washing the vaulted ceiling of the pavilion with brilliant light. Set back from the glass façade, the shear walls embracing the building's core across all floors are uniformly illuminated using Compact lens wallwashers in 24W and 32W warm white integrated in the ceiling, affording a view inside the pavilion at night or in passing, revealing interior aspects such as the exhibits.

Architect and lighting designer Alexander Bellman, who founded Gruppo C14 in Milan in 2003 and currently employs a 20-strong team, values the collaboration with ERCO, praising the quality of ERCO lighting tools: "The energy efficiency, long life and low maintenance requirements of the products are compelling," the lighting designer explains, continuing: "Another strong argument is the use of Spherolit lenses to ensure perfect visual control for a precisely planned and implemented lighting concept – giving us absolute certainty in planning. Visuals and the actual result are virtually congruent."



About the author:

Kristina Raderschad has run an editorial office in Cologne since 2005. A qualified interior designer (Dipl.-Ing.), her articles, reports and interviews on architecture and design are published worldwide – in magazines such as AD Architectural Digest, A&W, ELLE DECORATION, HÄUSER, MARK or WALLPAPER*.

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