

Milano: A City Into Design
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Syllabus

Milano is today the financial capital of the Italian industry. It stands to Italy as New York stands to the United States. In this city there is the Stock Exchange, the publishing industry including the press, the economic platform for international trade and deals, and the center of the fashion world. It is a crossroad for art and industry to come together in its most enlightened fusion in the 20th and 21st century. Since the Middle Ages, Design reigns in Milano. This course charts the development of its city form and its architectural achievements from its foundation to the present.

Lesson 1. MILANO: A CITY STRADDLING THE GOTHIC WORLD

The very history of this city is its being the interface between the Italian peninsular and Northern Europe. Consistently linked to the political events of its adjacent nations, layers of a French and Germanic heritage are embedded in the urban tissue of Milano. Although Italy never really claimed a Gothic architecture of its own, it was nonetheless registering in some of its buildings the presence of that pronounced verticality. As a medieval might, castles, such as the Castello Sforzesco, and churches, such as the Milano Cathedral, bear witness to the engagement of the city to those northern currents. Leonardo da Vinci spent 17 years in Milano and painted *The Last Supper*. This introductory delivery will summarize the coming into being of Milano on the European map.

Lesson 2. FROM THE RENAISSANCE TO THE 19th CENTURY

Donato Bramante, the most celebrated architect of the High Renaissance, practiced in this city and gave a definitive imprint to the architectural culture of the area. Filarete, known also for his architectural treatise, designed the Ospedale Maggiore, one of the first Renaissance buildings in Milano. The city grew in political importance, physical size, and unique form reflecting the changes that the scientific method brought to a country deeply steeped into Catholic religion. It is in Milano that the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and Positivism, found its most ardent supporter. A deeply secular society, it developed first in Italy a railway system provoking a massive movement of the population from the rural to the urban setting. This lecture will cover the transformation of the city under these influences and the architectural milestones most representative of each phase.

Lesson 3. MODERN ARCHITECTURE IN MILANO

Milano became the economic engine for a rising industrial class, which bankrolled the creative talents of artists and intellectuals. Being a center for exchange of ideas and

contacts, Milano was consistently in touch with foreign influences and exported its own architects to design buildings around the world. The Triennale di Milano, started in 1933, became the primary venue for generations of architects and designers to come in contact with their colleagues worldwide. Towering this coterie of highly acclaimed architects was Gio Ponti, whose Pirelli Tower stood as the symbol of the economic miracle on post-war Italy. The gallery of names that made the city an international center of design is substantive. Franco Albini, Marco Zanuso, BBPR, Figini e Pollini, Vittoriano Viganò, Giancarlo De Carlo, and many others were all based in Milano and effectively gave shape to the contemporary city. These antecedents led all the way to work of Aldo Rossi, a late comer from the aforementioned generation, whose writings and buildings had impact worldwide for over 30 years.

Lesson 4. MILANO TODAY: RECENT TRENDS IN ARCHITECTURE

Milano is uncompromisingly projected into the future. It showcases architectural landmarks carrying the signature of star architects such as SANAA, Herzog & deMeuron, Rem Koolhaas, and Grafton Architects as well as the national protagonists of today such as Stefano Boeri, Cino Zucchi, Michele De Lucchi, and Antonio Citterio, all Milano-based. Milano Design Week, a yearly fair held every year in the month of April attracts visitors from around the globe. As the metropolitan area continues to grow and the historical center continuously transforms itself, various strategies are put in place ranging from new construction to adaptive re-use to give the city a new tomorrow. This talk goes over the most significant tendencies and their ramifications in the city.