

Ravelins of Castello Sforzesco

Milan, Italy, 2005–

The Castello Sforzesco, now home to a number of museums, is one of Milan's key civic landmarks. While its form is based on the original fifteenth-century layout, much of the present fabric is the result of a nineteenth-century restoration effort that sought to establish the historical pedigree of the industrialising city. Working with Michele de Lucchi, David Chipperfield Architects prepared a masterplan to reorganise the display of the castle's historic collections in order to make them more accessible to the public.

Two historic remnants of the medieval fortifications just outside the castle walls, known as ravelins, formed part of a defensive structure on the west side of the castle. These ravelins survived the Napoleonic demolition of 1800. In the seventeenth century the towers were joined together for military purposes and remained so until the end of the 1800s when Luca Beltrami, the architect responsible for the nineteenth-century restoration, demolished all post-fifteenth-century elements in favour of historicist interventions.

As part of the general reorganisation of the current masterplan, the ravelins offer a new point of access and vertical circulation for the castle, uniting the different levels from the moat to the covered walkway on the battlements. After thorough historical analysis of the volumetric and functional evolution of the castle over the last six centuries, the new intervention will complement the existing forms, which are stripped of all decorative elements. The ruins will be renovated to form a new entrance and to create exhibition spaces for the display of a collection of fifteenth-century arms and armour. It will also house a cafeteria, restaurant and a new lift, allowing easy access for visitors to the battlements.

The new structure is not intended to be perceived independently of the historic form but rather as a continuation of the existing geometries of the medieval building. As such the inclusion of the required contemporary elements has not led to an architectural concept that relies on extreme contrast of form or shape to indicate a new intervention. The newly added walls are made of brick and stone and left devoid of any decoration, quietly expressing the difference between the old and the new.

Date	2005–
Gross floor area	59,230 m ²
Client	Comune di Milano
Competition	David Chipperfield Architects, London, aMDL Arch. Michele De Lucchi, Milan
Design architect	David Chipperfield Architects, Milan
Design and managing director	Giuseppe Zampieri
Associate	Giuseppe Sirica
Project architect	Andrea Cocco
Structural engineer	Studio Modena Ingegneria, Verona
Services engineer	Giovanna Mori
Photography	Richard Davies



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