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Progetti di velluto con un'anima d'acciaio

Velvety projects with a steel soul

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il progetto raccontato



Virgin Active Classic, Milano, febbraio 2010 - interior design by Studio Franco Scaglia - photos courtesy of Studio Franco Scaglia

Reinterpretare facendo i conti con la storia

Re-interpretation reckoning with history

Lo Studio Scaglia realizza il primo club Virgin Active Classic in Italia, reinterpretando gli spazi dello storico Club Conti di Milano

Studio Scaglia designed the first Virgin Active Classic club in Italy, re-interpreting the spaces of the historic Conti Club in Milan



La trasformazione dello storico Club Conti di Corso Como a Milano, a seguito della nuova gestione di Virgin Active, ha costituito una sfida impegnativa per lo Studio Scaglia. L'intervento ha infatti riguardato uno spazio di notevoli dimensioni (circa 5000 mq), per due terzi interrato, occupato per un cinquantennio da uno dei più celebri centri di fitness del capoluogo lombardo. La presenza di continue aggregazioni



The conversion of the historic Conti Club in Corso Como, Milan, following new management under Virgin Active, was a demanding challenge for Studio Scaglia. The project, in short, involved a very large space (about 5000 sq.m.), two-thirds of which below ground level, occupied for about 50 years by one of the most famous fitness centres in Milan. The presence of continuous aggregations of spaces, a history of consolidated success to measure up with and the huge number of technical-structural problems certainly meant that this project involved a complicated layout. Yet the challenge was made all the more important in view of the features required for the new club. In short, it is the first "classic" club by Virgin Active in Italy: a type of club distinguished from more consolidated "family" and "urban" clubs by focusing on a more refined image. In this context, the work of the Franco Scaglia Studio of Architecture first and foremost took shape in a complete re-definition of the facilities that, obviously, had to reckon with existing structures.

The presence, for example, of the swimming pool on the second level basement meant the entire "wet area" had to be located on this level (including the swimming pool itself and the spa, with relative service facilities). Moreover, the features of a structure two-thirds below ground imposed particularly attentive work in terms of illumination systems to solve lighting problems in the areas at the same time as ensuring more scenic impact. The requirement not to repeat the styles of other Virgin Active clubs also involved the re-interpretation of the image of the club, particularly on the ground floor with the reception, which was especially achieved through great care in the use of materials and finishes to ensure a personality capable of clearly standing out from other Virgin clubs. In this regard, mention must also be made of the insertion of the first Virgin Café, linked to the Club but also with its own separate entrance (in Via Tocqueville) with a dual function as an annex to the Club itself and a space capable of living its own life integrated into the surrounding quarter. In this regard, this was an important test for a Virgin Club and a solution that may also be taken up elsewhere. In general, in any case, the project defines a club suitable for a large city and consequently not easy to replicate. Nevertheless, Studio Scaglia is currently designing a similar club in Rome. Work on an existing building, with special attention to materials, finishes, lighting and harmonisation of spaces was a challenge that certainly gave the settings of the historic Conti Club a completely updated image. The risk was undoubtedly that of not being able to bear comparison with a consolidated history and thereby upset the "old guard" of accustomed clients. A risk that Studio Scaglia seems to have entirely avoided given the huge success of the Club. ■

