



REPUBLICAN ARSENALS

HISTORIC TRANSPARENCY

Pisa, Italy

FABIO DAOLE, MARIO PASQUALETTI

The Arsenals of the Republic of Pisa are along the city's ancient docks, but over the centuries their usage has changed numerous times. Originally naval storage spaces in the age of the Pisan republic, they continued as such through the Medici dynasty, but during the reign of the Hapsburg House of Lorraine, they were converted into stables for the princes before becoming a major Savoy barracks in the mid-19th century.

In 2015, Fabio Daole and Mario Pasqualetti completed their municipal-commissioned restoration project. Their brief was to create a symbol for the city and an exhibition area in which archeological remnants, documentation and restored architecture could tell of this glorious past. Originally a 14th-century structure, the volume has a single above-ground floor characterized by right angles and straight lines, with soaring openings along the front. The designers held true to this historical form, keeping the original shapes and spaces, while using a Secco Sistemi glazed façade to optimize visual transparency.

The first step in the restoration project was to dig out nearly 7 thousand cubic meters of earth to return to the 14th-century level of the building. This unfortunately brought to light the seriously deteriorated state of the brickwork, so this had to be taken down and then rebuilt using only

the bricks and material recovered on site, harmonizing this into the new architectural plan. In many cases, the uncovered flooring, basins and cisterns were deliberately left visible as tangible testimonies of the history of these Arsenals.

Daole and Pasqualetti's greatest achievement was to beautifully interpret the original, unusual nature of the Arsenals, at times integrating contemporary elements elegantly and discreetly into the overall picture. For example, they preserved and restored the pointed arches to return the original perception of interior space, but then opted for Secco Sistemi's 4F1 thermal break self-supporting curtain wall with mullions and transoms with SA 15 tubular profiles in coated galvanized steel so that the Arsenals could remain open throughout the year - as was the original design, although back then the complex was also open to the elements.

The choice of Secco Sistemi products was a key decision in ensuring efficiency, technical performance and visual appearance. Despite the imposing windows, the SA 15 profile system creates a solid, yet light appearance able to withstand local conditions. Finally, the high elastic modulus of the 4F1 metal provides a solid and versatile, yet light frame in which the mullions are only 50 mm across.



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