



VALVIGNA

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PRADA GROUP AND GUIDO CANALI:
A COMMON VISION

THE VISION OF PRADA:
PATRIZIO BERTELLI



"For Prada, the task of choosing an architect to design company projects has never been merely a simple question of aesthetics, style or architectural language. Although such elements are important for a piece of work that will have an impact on the landscape and leave a mark on it,

THE CHOICE IS BASED ABOVE
ALL ON A
SHARED
OUTLOOK.

With Guido Canali, we developed a

COMMON VISION

of how to interpret the factory and its work environment, basing it on three fundamental

principles: **RESPECT** for the workers and their labour, a fully synergistic interpretation of the

concept of **'QUALITY**

WITHOUT

COMPROMISES' ;

and recognition of the importance of

DETAILS

 as an expression of efficiency - not aesthetics as an end in itself.

Prada and Guido Canali were precursors of such ethics, cultivating them together over **twenty years of collaboration**. They intentionally and spontaneously introduced these principles at a moment in history in which awareness of these values had not yet been acknowledged as a moral duty.





The industrial headquarters in Valvigna, Tuscany represent an embodiment of these principles. The

building is **RESPECTFUL
OF THE PLACE**

where it belongs; it generates responsible,

SUSTAINABLE

EFFICIENCY ; and attains

balance between its architecture and the natural surroundings."

Patrizio Bertelli,

CEO of Prada Group



THE VISION OF ARCHITECT:
GUIDO CANALI

"A WORKPLACE
WHERE
WELLBEING IS
COMBINED WITH
PRODUCTIVITY
IN A **NATURAL**
EQUILIBRIUM.



The Valvigna plant
is designed for the

WELLBEING OF
THE PEOPLE who work there.

The project expresses a **quasi religious respect for nature**, which is safeguarded and restored, and for the **value and dignity** of work that is performed therein.

The underlying inspiration is the conviction that workplaces should not respond only to the demands

of functionality and productivity, but must also be **human places, made for humans.**

The presence of **gardens and green areas and the luminosity** of the interiors are intended as an effective source of relief from the exertions of work.

THE CONTINUOUS
QUEST FOR
BALANCE
BETWEEN GARDEN
AND BUILDING,
BETWEEN
ARCHITECTURAL
RIGOUR AND THE
FREEDOM OF THE
NATURAL ELEMENTS.

The factory
reveals itself in
secret patios,
in hallways
suffused by
light filtering
in through
unexpected
apertures , in
the **spacious**,
open and
luminous
laboratories of
the upper floor.





The project is the fruit of the

PERFECT
MASTERY OF A
TRADE,

the meticulous attention
to every detail, the conviction that the building
site

is itself a factory where

IDEAS TAKE
FORM
AND CHANGE,

looking for new forms.”

Guido Canali

Architect



1999

MONTEVARCHI

Arezzo



2001

MONTEGRANARO

Fermo



2017

VALVIGNA

Arezzo

2

VALVIGNA:

BETWEEN ARCHITECTURE AND NATURE

INTRODUCTION



The Prada Group unveils the architecture of the new industrial headquarters in Valvigna, in the province of Arezzo, completed during 2017.

The project was entrusted to architect

GUIDO CANALI,

author of Prada's plants in Montevarchi (1999) and Montegranaro (2001), and of the new Logistical Pole in Levarella, currently in the process of completion.

The industrial headquarters in Valvigna hosts the production division and the development of the Prada and Miu Miu **leather goods collections**, the warehouses for raw materials, the **historical archives** of the leather goods and footwear collections, the offices for general services and industrial administration, an **auditorium, systems areas** and the Prada Group **data processing centre**.

For Valvigna, Guido Canali develops and brings to completion several recurrent themes of his work, already partially explored in the two previous projects for Montevarchi and Montegranaro, which, together with the new headquarters, are now frequently defined as

“ G A R D E N
F A C T O R I E S ” .



To recover a degraded territory and to mitigate the landscape impact of the planned construction, these are the verbs that tell of the endeavour undertaken by the Prada Group and by architect Guido Canali during their **long-lasting collaboration**. For Valvigna in particular, over a number of years, with **tenacity**,

rigour and patience, neighbouring land is acquired, whilst there is planning, building and tree-planting. Activities overlap and are stratified: the project is refined as the building is defined. The architect is a master carpenter; the worksite is the place for the fine tuning.



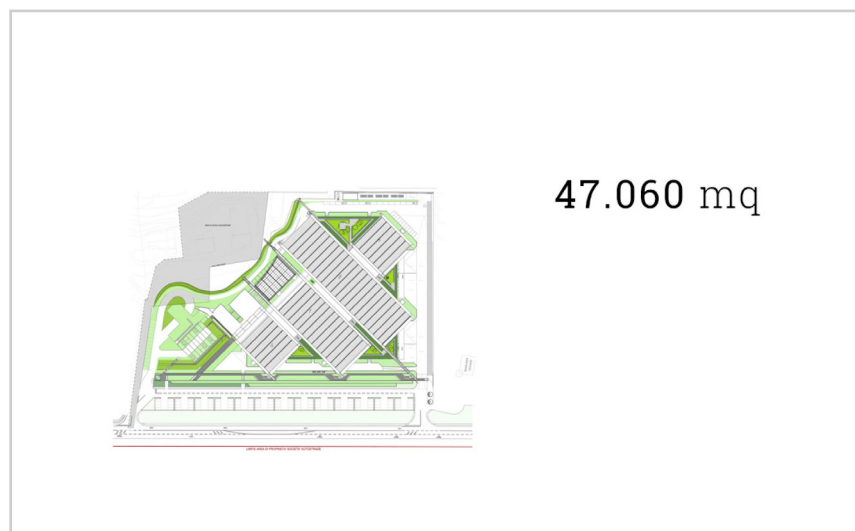
1995



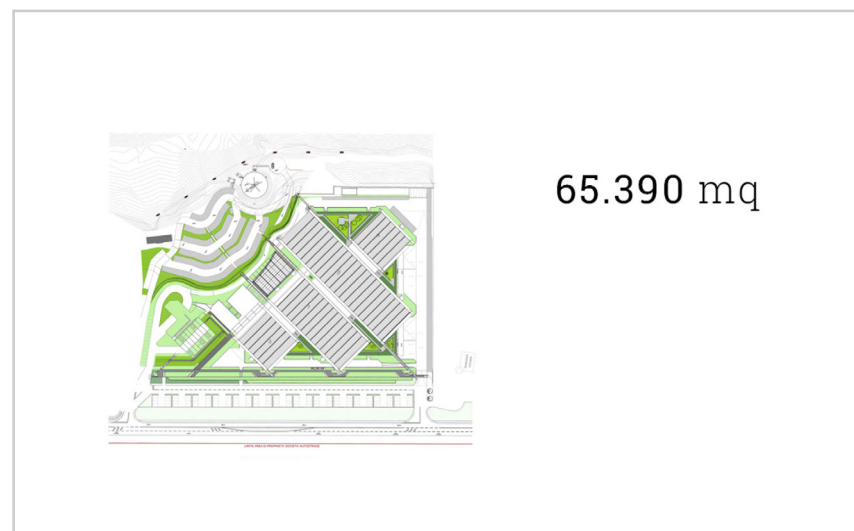
1999



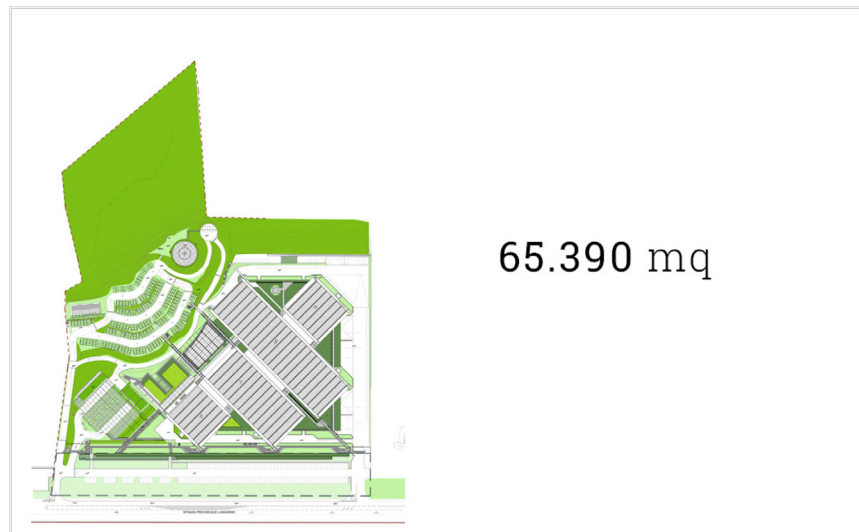
2000



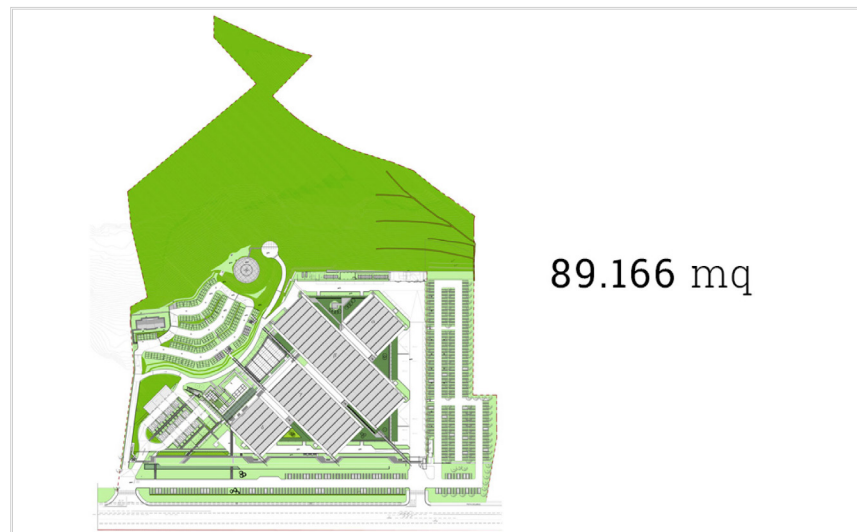
2007



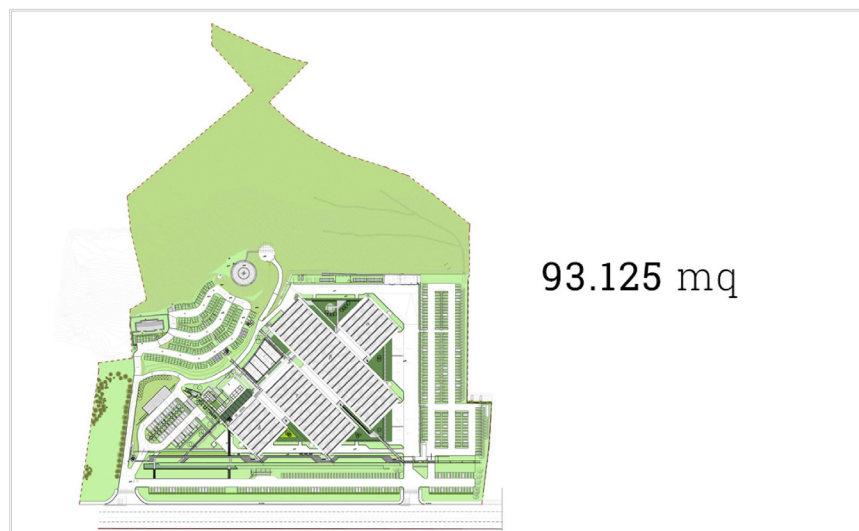
2008



2011

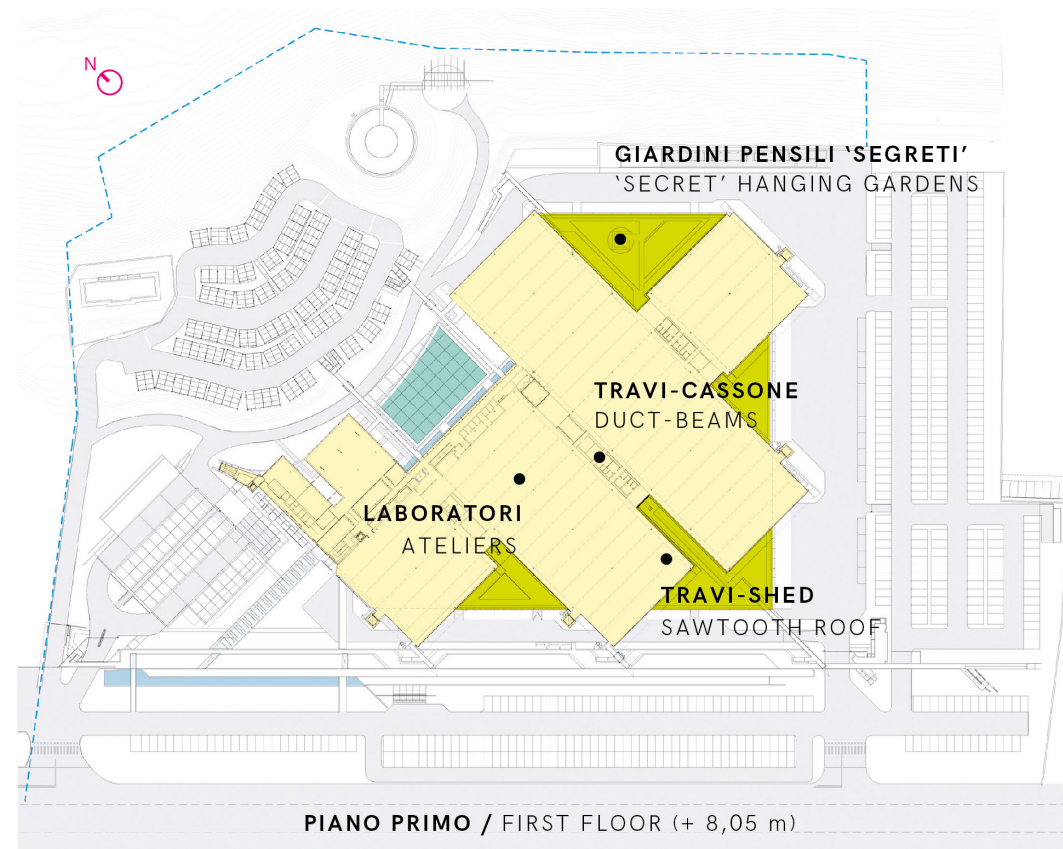
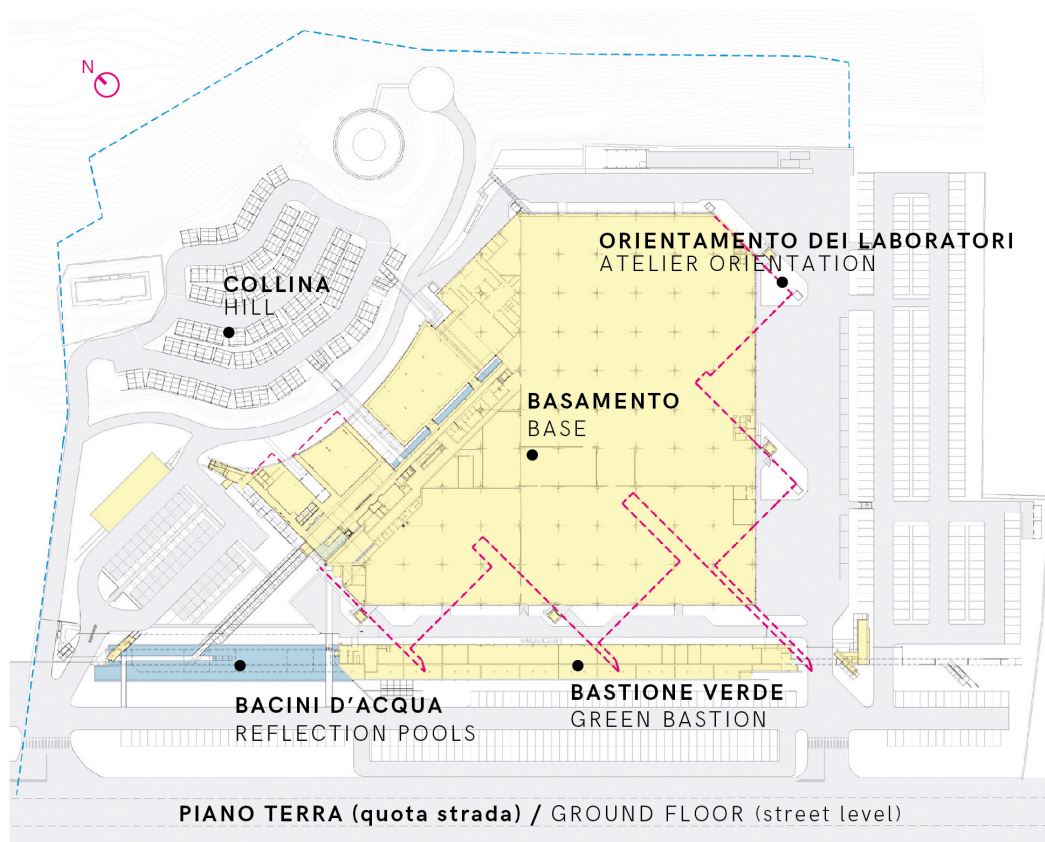


2014



2017





T H E P R O J E C T :

TO RECOVER A DEGRADED TERRITORY AND MITIGATE
THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE BUILDING

IN 1998 THE
PRADA GROUP
PURCHASED
A PLOT OF
ABOUT

30,000 SQ.M.

along the A1 Milan- Rome motorway
in the province of

AREZZO

specifically in the municipality of
Terranuova Bracciolini.



The area was initially the site of an old factory that made concrete roof tiles, Cementegola, abandoned for years. **The zoning plan called for its redevelopment.**

The Prada Group commissioned architect Guido Canali of Parma to build a plant with warehouses on the ground floor and production labs upstairs, with a separate building for offices and a canteen.

OVER TIME, WITH
THE PATIENCE AND
DETERMINATION OF
AN ARTISAN, PRADA
ACQUIRED BORDERING
PROPERTIES TO GIVE
THE **BUILDING**
SPACE TO
BREATHE, AND THE
PROJECT PROCEEDED.

THE BUILDING
IS DESIGNED
TO EXIST IN
RELATION TO
THE NEEDS
OF THOSE WHO
WORK THERE,
TO THE
EYES OF THE
MOTORISTS



WHO DRIVE PAST
IT, TO THE
SURROUNDING
PREEXISTING
LANDSCAPE THAT
WILL REMAIN
AS SUCH ONCE
CONSTRUCTION
HAS CONCLUDED.



LOWERING



SCREENING OFF.

HOW TO CREATE HARMONY?



TERRACING





LOWERING.

Based on the example of Montevarchi, where the road level is aligned with the top of the building through a series of descending green 'stairs'.



SCREENING OFF.

Based on the example of Montegrano, where walls and wings create scenic views.



In front of the factory is a wide strip (40 metres) of

PARKING AND ROADS

for public use. The plan thus displaces the building further back and adds an intermediary curtain composed of three earthen steps covered by large planters that host **rows of vines**. The ground floor disappears from view and the factory seems to rest upon this new floor, 8 metres above the level of the plaza.

TERRACING.

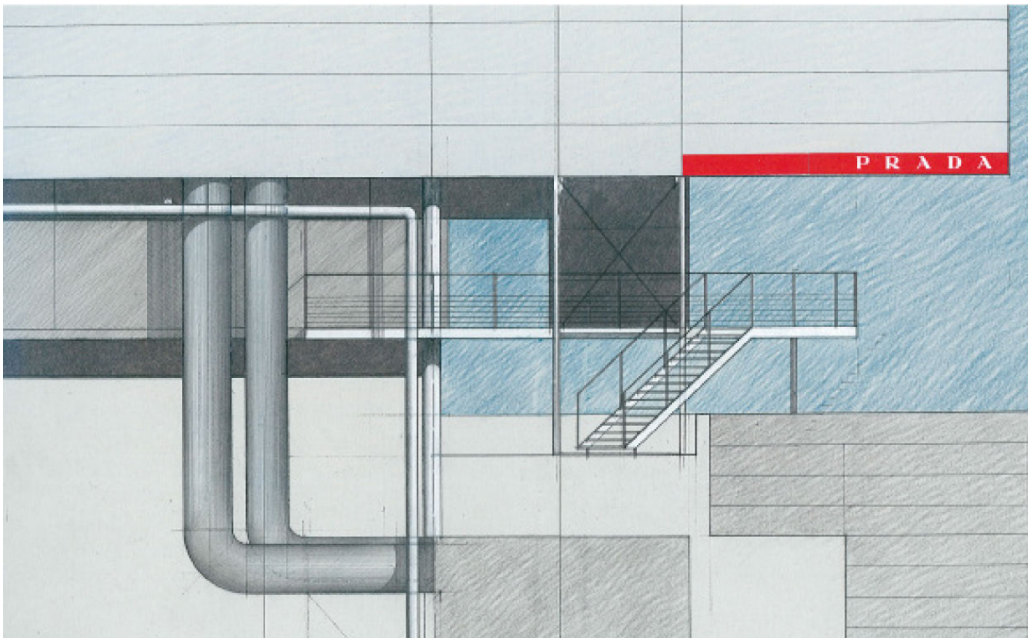
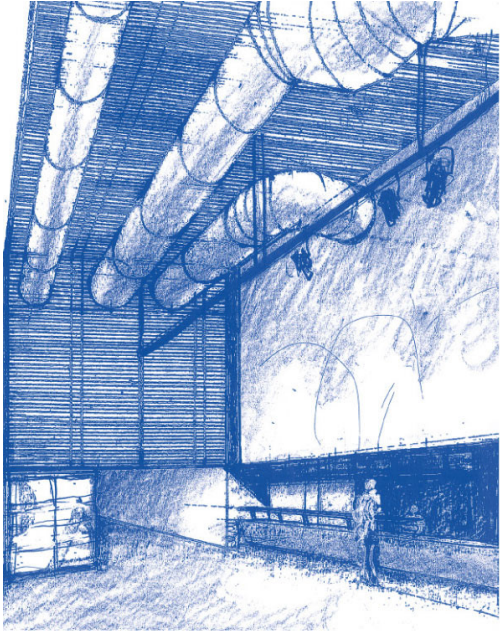
The horizontality of the steps defines the entire length of the lot, becoming visible where the heavy volume of the building disappears.

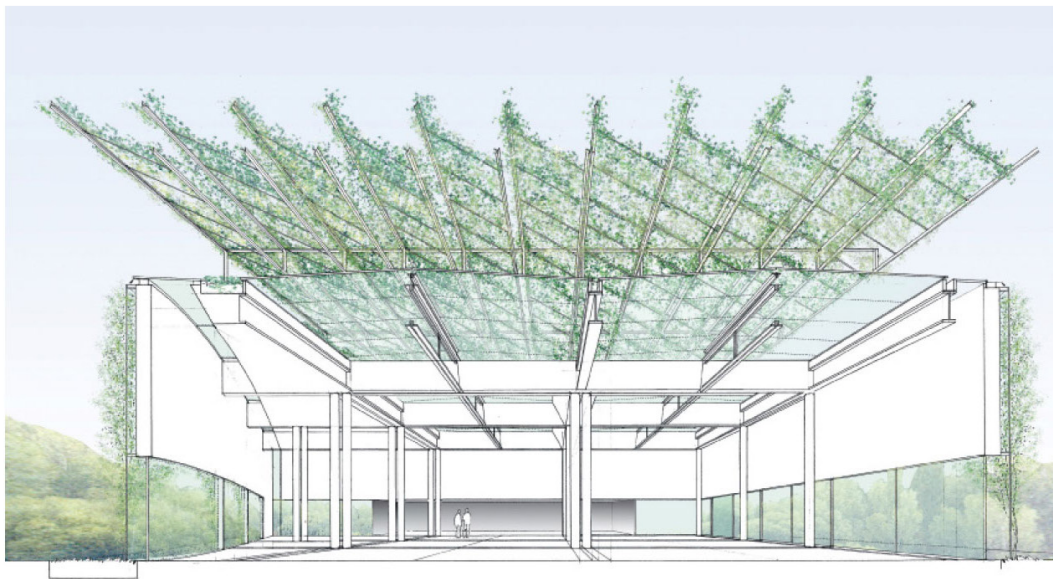
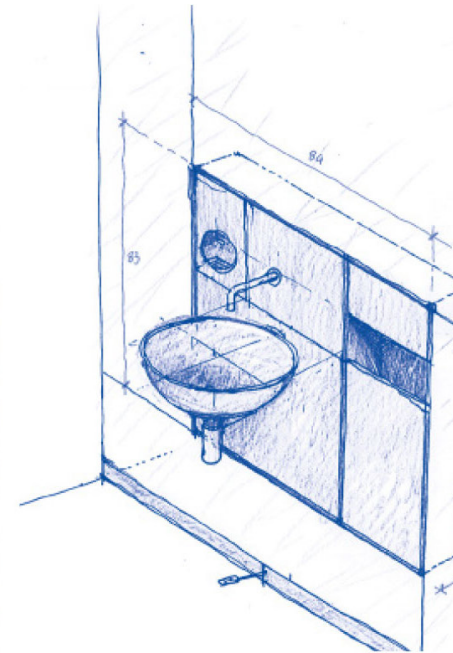
The upper floor seems to be made of air and light: large sheds, 36 metres long, frame the sky from the interior while projecting surfaces provide privileged viewpoints to admire the hills and the Arno River. These same views are offered by the hanging gardens, which complete the illusion of being at ground level, above a natural terrace.

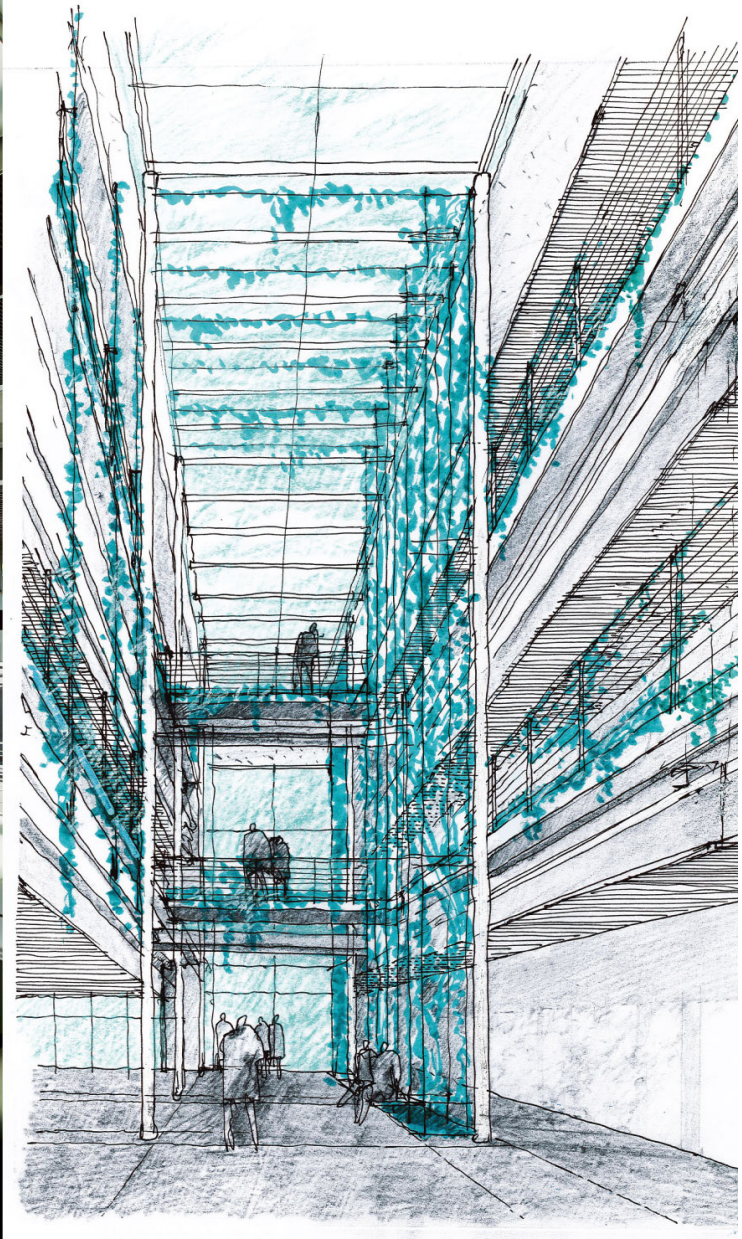
The design of the rear façade was more difficult because the space is limited, the hill is in disarray and unsightly preexisting buildings loom over the area from just a few metres away.

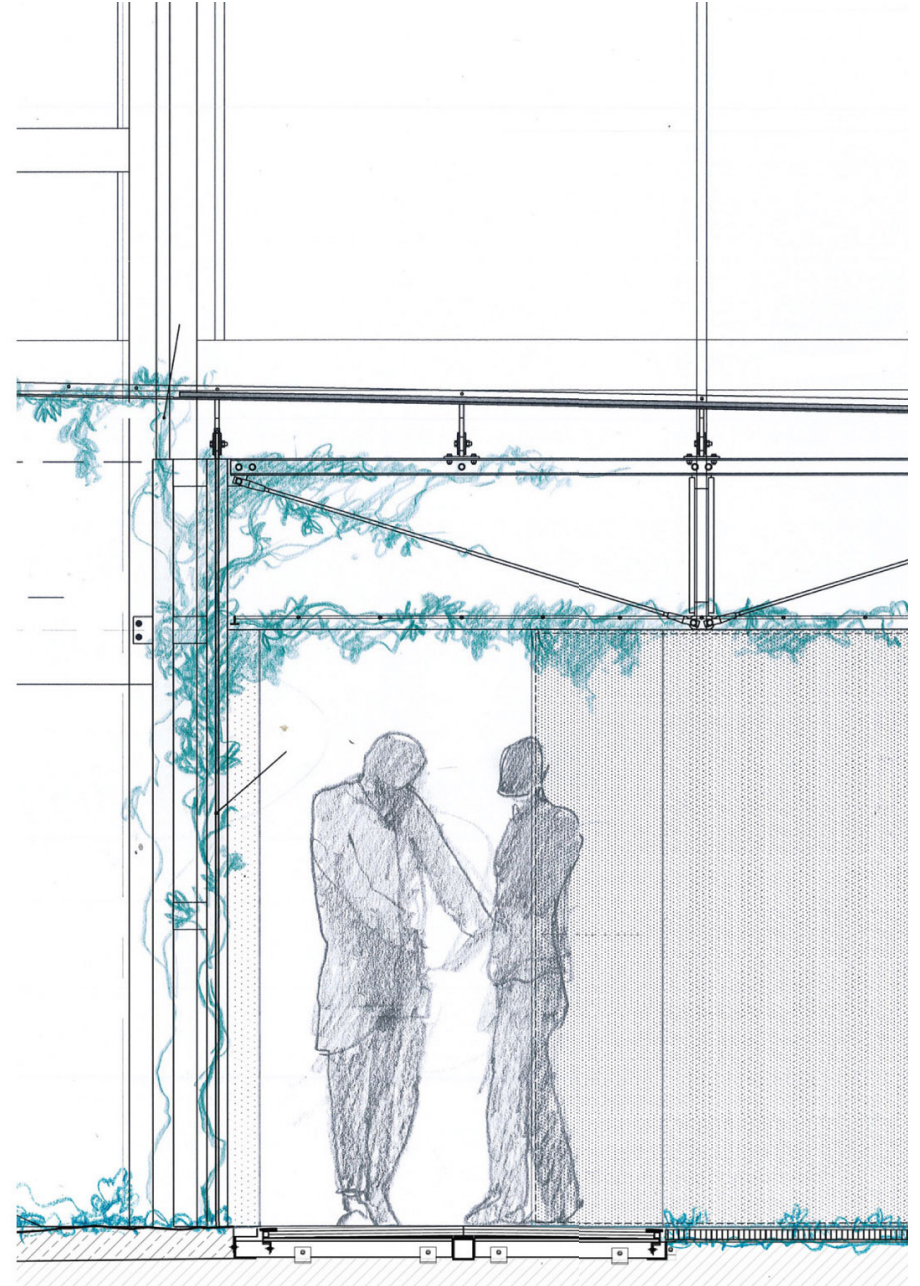
WHILE THE
FACTORY WAS
BEING BUILT,
THE HILL WAS
RECOMPOSED IN
A DIALOGUE
WITH THE
REDISCOVERED
LANDSCAPE.

VALVIGNA: SKETCHES









VALVIGNA BY NUMERS

Total external
installations

37,815 mq

Lying on the A1 motorway, the 'garden factory' in Valvigna measures 33,000 square metres, and is built on a 93,125-square-metre site. This plant functions as the

CENTRAL

NODE of Prada's

PRODUCTION

AND

CREATIVITY network.

Total built
environment

32,431 mq

Total area

93,125 mq

Covered area

19,000 mq

It is located in the Tuscan territory where Prada has historical roots: the Valdarno valley of the river Arno in the province of Arezzo,

Italy's main district for **LUXURY**
LEATHER GOODS.

Geographically, it is centrally located in the company's decentralised production chain. Hosting a complex combination of uses and types of departments - manufacturing, executive offices, laboratories for research and development, warehouses, archives and databank - the factory's design aims to reinstate the relation with the agricultural past of the surroundings.

Similar to a large, **SENSITIVE**
ORGANISM the complex can easily adjust and grow over time, in dynamic harmony with the different wings, each housing different functions. Circulation is laid out according to the 'nervous system' of emergency exits, and facilitates the movement of

people and goods. Above all, the focus is on high-



VALVIGNA - THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT (sqm)

Ground floor
Plant
Raw material
warehouse

9.716

Ground floor
Plant
Historical archive

2.575

Ground floor
Plant
New group
datacenter

515

Upstream external
technological areas

800

Downstream external
technological areas

2.160

Restaurant building
+ kitchen

1.708

First floor
Plant
laboratories
+ offices

11.800

Management
office building

3.157

3 GUIDO CANALI:
PRADA FACTORIES

GUIDO CANALI

PRESENTS THE FACTORIES

I hope it is evident, especially to those who walk through them in real life, that these factories were conceived

above all to **AGREE WITH**

THE PEOPLE inside them,
to contribute to alleviating the daily stress of many
hundreds of persons.

That might seem an obvious statement, but such consideration is often disregarded in situations where there is more involvement in self-celebratory and self-referential endeavours than in patiently stepping into the shoes of the people who will need to use the spaces.

THE AIM OF OUR
ARCHITECTURAL PURSUIT
HAS BEEN NOT EXCESS
AND EXTRAVAGANCE,
BUT **ATTENTIVE**
DIALOGUE WITH
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTAL
SURROUNDINGS
THAT BY NOW HAVE
BECOME AFFLICTED BY
DETERIORATION AND
CONTAMINATION ALMOST
EVERYWHERE.



I like to think that in our decades-long collaboration with Prada we have shared the greatest degree of commitment toward **building correctly,** down to the last details, even though we were dealing with manufacturing sites. With the same exacting scrupulousness that is the norm in the realisation of shops,

we pinned our faith on rigorous principles of production-related

FUNCTIONALITY AND RATIONALITY.

Using almost primitive materials, we raised buildings where no compromise was made in the

RICHNESS OF THE SPACES or the QUALITY OF THE ARCHITECTURE.

At the same time, they offer what Le Corbusier described as
a promenade architecturale, a

PATHWAY OF INTENSE EMOTIVE QUALITY,

through the built space.

In Valvigna, there are **walkways suspended** from trusses
that overstride the entire complex like the legs of a giant
techno-spider.



Then there are the **reflection ponds**, cut out on the ground floor of the complex, with the potential to be used as reservoirs to satisfy a share of the **factory's energy requirements**.

They also mirror the sun at the bottom of the light wells, through dark patches of ivy, and open up highly **seductive sight lines**, between the blocks of buildings.

There is the **dining hall** ideated to be like a **spacious glasshouse**.

It assures efficiency and speed to the movement of hundreds of employees, at the same time regaling the cheerfulness of an **extra-luminous space** unified with the gardens outside.


My hope is that in each of the three factories, visitors and most of all the people who labour there are able to perceive - over and above the mandatory **functional efficacy and respect** for the work of everyone - the bounty of spatial felicity that is customarily the condition of authentic architecture.

I am referring not only to Valvigna, but also to Montevarchi and Montegrano, particularly the areas designated for collective use such as atriums, internal walkways, planted patios and offices.

THE SITE

Another intriguing aspect is the relation between each of the three factories and the specific context of their surroundings. In Valvigna, the lot was already occupied by an abandoned industrial building in shambles.

REBUILDING on the same footprint allowed to save an equivalent parcel of farmland compared to constructing on unbuilt land. From an environmental point of view, this was a laudable move conducted over twenty years before a norm that was only recently approved in Italy, for example in 2014 by the regional law in Tuscany, article 68.



In addition to said indisputable merit,
Prada commendably executed an important
operation of

ENVIRONMENTAL REHABILITATION.

Materially, by converting all unbuilt areas of leftover land into gardens, including the parking spaces that were made using the technique of **reinforced turf**.

Also the various at roof surfaces of the complex were turned into **luxuriant roof gardens** thickly planted with trees and creeping ground cover. And visually, by creating an environmental setting where the ground level of the complex is erased by the magic of dense grapevines covering a tiered hillside of approximately 300 metres long and 6 metres high. These verdant, stepped espaliers of *Vitis vinifera* are a literary reference to the ancient place name of Valvigna ("valley of vineyards"). They colour the base of the complex along the autostrada with

naturalness.

Clinging to the pedestal, the vegetal blanket of vines changes colour and consistency with the passing of the seasons: naked branches in winter, tender green in spring, bushy in summer, turning rust in autumn. We must **emphasise the tenacity** demonstrated by Prada, which for years continued to purchase plots of farmland to the rear of the built parcel in order to obtain a **hilly backdrop** of deciduous woods that extends over twice the size of the original area for construction. Such prodigious **reclamation of the landscape** conducted in Valvigna over the course of twenty years was unattainable in the setting of the other two smaller factories, built

before it. The perimeter of these lots was encircled by other buildings except for a precious extension of garden-parking lot behind the Montevarchi plant. Around these two "lesser" factories (in the sense of size; I should hope not in the sense of quality) the built environment was ragged and decrepit. In Montevarchi, the land used to be agricultural, but had been contaminated by confused development, both housing and small factories. In Montegrano, parcellisation was of the home-made variety, dramatically sprawling out over the gentle hills of the Marche.



THE WALKWAYS

Sometimes four, but at least two times per day, the people who work in the factory celebrate the rite of arrival and departure from the workplace. In the three factories, we were committed to welcome this flow not through anonymous foyers in commonplace hangars,

but through a

SUCCESION
OF SPACES that

would be EMOTIVELY

RICH AND

WELL VARIED

in its landscaped profile.

Therefore, faced with the impossibility of conducting a dialogue with the immediate surroundings, it seemed inevitable to adopt an

INTROVERTED

LAYOUT, but not without long, built-in sight lines towards the

horizon of FARAWAY

HILLS, luckily still pristine.



As we mentioned, people entering the **MONTEVARCHI** plant are met with the surprise of an introverted alley skirted by **rows of bamboo** until they reach the barycentric, transparent atrium illuminated from above.



In **MONTEGRANARO**, as we saw, a parallel sequence of **steel frames** marks the entrance of the complex. The frames are hung with prefabricated panels of concrete, much like the wings of a theatre stage. Then they merge into the sheath of the double-height atrium.



In **VALVIGNA**, seeing the larger dimensions of the complex, the sequence is much richer. Here, a 50-metre reflection pond is crossed by walking on a **luminescent ribbon-like pathway**. This leads through an enveloping “technological” pergola all surrounded by vines and ivy and canopied by acid-etched glass to protect against rain. Finally, there is an atrium like a **vertical glasshouse** all the way to the production halls flooded by light, looking out on unexpected roof gardens lush with greenery. Each is differently identified by virtue of prevalent native plant species: pomegranate, rosemary, lavender, fig tree, vinca and hypericum. Coming from the other side, from the hillside parking lots, suspended walkways of metal grating are hung from trusses and projected into the green growth, as we already mentioned.

Thanks to the

PLEASANTNESS

of the garden spaces and the stimulating variety of the settings, these transfer routes at the beginning and end of

the work shifts iterate a JOYOUS

RITUAL to assuage weariness day after day.

THE FRONTS

Precisely the **MOVEMENT** of people on all sides, and goods at the loading bays toward the warehouses on the internal side of the complex, is what traces out the framework of the factory. There is no main facade. There is actually not even one facade. The factory's outer appearance, marked by horizontal lines, is always announced to the eye by a **soft, greened foreground** that in the end is the real elevation. There is the tiered vineyard seen by motorists from the autostrada, but also the pergolas seen from the hill.

The pergolas follow the **curving terraces of earth**, formerly subject to landslides, and now accurately remodelled with reinforcements. In the same way, from higher ground, the high vectorial trajectories of the boxed beams carrying pedestrians and utility ducts plunge through grapevines and rosemary bushes.



THE GREENERY

The profuse amount of **vegetation planted** at the three factories, particularly emphasised in Valvigna, is aimed at obtaining

PEACEFUL

surroundings that contribute to alleviating fatigue.

Prada merits much credit for the care it takes in creating **a high-quality working environment** based on respect for the dignity of workers. Prada is an authoritative follower of the initiatives and experiences undertaken by Adriano Olivetti sixty years ago.

These environments have come into being thanks to architecture that refuses gratuitous gesticulation and exhibitionism, that consistently

strives to allow for **decantation** and the elimination of whatever is not indispensable, architecture that is informed by critical rigour born of rationalist ancestry. The luscious gardens, secretly ensconced, the shading pergolas draped with *Vitis vinifera*, the glossy ponds do not represent the expressionistic gratification of the architects, but **respect for the dignity and health**, physical and psychic, of the people who within these walls and these gardens nonetheless need to work and toil. Moreover, we must mention the link that remains strong with the agricultural communities where many of the employees were born and raised, and now work for Prada at the two plants in the Valdarno area, or the one in the Marche region. What better source of content than to offer employees who come from the neighbouring counties

the joy of finding the trees and plants of their childhood within the walls of their labour? For those who grew up in the city, the same vegetation is a symbol of country life, synonymous with **serenity and freedom**. Therefore, to create a delectable crown for the workplace in Valvigna, we chose plants belonging to the local rural tradition: fig trees, pomegranates, grapevines, rosemary, jujubes, mulberries and others. To these we added the typical vegetation growing on the uncultivated hills nearby: elderberry, honeysuckle, porcelainberry and ivy. As a direct reference to the brush found on the flood plains of the Arno River, we planted rows of columnar poplars to mark the ancient confines of farmland and the new outlines of the project. (We did not use the statuesque cypress, however

authentically Tuscan it is, for it is physiologically extraneous to these alluvial plains.) All these plant species are tied together by naturalised other types such as the omnipresent confederate jasmine. Particularly in Valvigna, we took care to select mature exemplars of trees with contorted trunks, bushes



grown from stumps (never the artificial shrubs serially grown by nurseries), and luminous expanses of aromatic herbs. This enables factory workers to breathe air that **smells like home**, accentuating their feeling of gratitude toward the company that promoted this welcoming habitat, and strengthening the pride they feel in belonging to this visionary group. If we analyse how much more it might cost in general to build a garden-factory instead of an ordinary industrial building, plain and simple, without the enjoyment of a single arboreal embellishment, we can conclude that the delta of increase is irrelevant compared to the psychophysical benefits that are generated.

This is also the case compared to the overall budget of the complex if, as we have attempted at the

three factories of Montevarchi, Montegranaro and most markedly Valvigna, care is taken to neutralise most of the cost of the greenery and reflection ponds by seeking greater savings in other parts of the construction - for instance by using low-cost building materials and methods, especially for the compartments with the largest dimensions such as warehouses and production halls made in heavy prefabricated elements. The formula of "low unit cost multiplied by large extensions" allowed us to balance the cost of the generous expanses of gardens we designed, along with certain architecturally more elaborate areas such as the entrance foyers, stairs and administrative offices, which are provided with large surfaces of glazing.

To the great satisfaction of architects and client, we can conclude that the costs of the Prada garden-factories are in line with the average price of current industrial construction in Italy.

P R A D A L A N D S C A P E S

I N T E R I O R F A C T O R I E S

Gruppo Prada prefers the **purchase and restoration of existing plants** to the building of new ones. When no existing buildings can be found, they call the masters of architecture as a guarantee of landscape building rather than land consumption.



BEAUTIFUL AS VILLAS

, the factories are skilfully designed buildings creating a delicate balance between visible and invisible, proximity and distance, focusing on the external appearance but also on the

QUALITY perceived from inside.

These 'INTRO-VERTED'
BUILDINGS

have hidden gardens like medieval cloisters, arbours, secret spaces of welcome and harmony but also unexpected openings towards faraway landscapes capable to give

moments of AESTHETIC
ENJOYMENT.

Allusive and suggestive hedges and walls that gain expressive value in their dryness open to any possible meaning.

LANDSCAPES

MONTEVARCHI

In Montevarchi, bamboo groves along the walkways squeezed between two walls, reminiscent of the old landscapes of the historical city, bamboo groves even inside the factory.

Bamboo, a very docile, tall and slender plant, is precise as an architectural element, reprising the columns of the arcade and the nursery, columns among columns.

A green wall inside overwhelmed by a small-leafed vine, *Ficus Repens*, just like in Villa Balbianello on Lake Como or like it used to be at the Fondazione Magnani Rocca.



MONTEGRANARO

The garden of Montegrano preserves the original land and its history: low hedges of native Mediterranean plants evoking the nearby sea, like lavender, rosemary, teucrium, a few tall trees, olive trees, a lot of refreshing vines, rincospernum and a handful of cypresses like exclamation points on a hilltop. All this is hidden behind a high wall without sharp corners, the archetype of a garden consisting of a plot of land stolen from the natural landscape and subject to the human order.



VALVIGNA

The time spent and familiarity gained with the Valvigna landscape suggest the right plants to utilize. The first thing to do is the roof garden. Among the many possible options, plants with spring blooms and autumn foliage. However, the final choice is for simple and rustic fruit trees, as if they had been found already there by an agronomist-archaeologist: jujubes, pomegranate, figs.

On the contrary, the large front steps have gone through a radical change: from the original Mediterranean scrub fully covering the building to its limits, to protect and separate the interior from the exterior space, to the final choice of simple rows of vines echoing the origin of the place

name of Valvigna and emphasizing the agricultural history of the landscape to rebuild and restore the link with tradition. And then the groundcovers: *Cotoneaster Repens*, *Hipericum*, *Rosmarinus*, *Vinca Minor*; vines: *Rincosphermum*, *lonicera*, *Ampelopsis*; trees: *Zizziphus Jujuba*, *Punica Granatum*, *Ficus* and many other examples of *Vitis Vinifera*.





MONTEGRANARO
AND MONTEVARCHI

M O N T E G R A N A R O

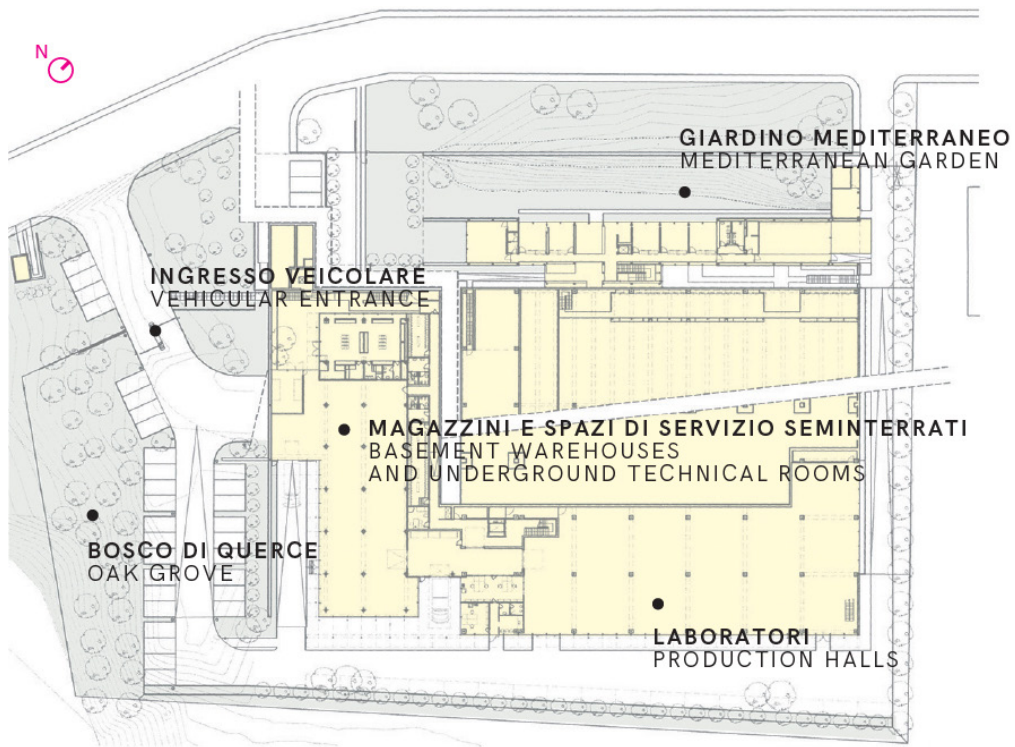
The factory in Montegranaro stands on a

10,850-SQUARE-METRE
SITE on the flank of a hill facing the valley of the River

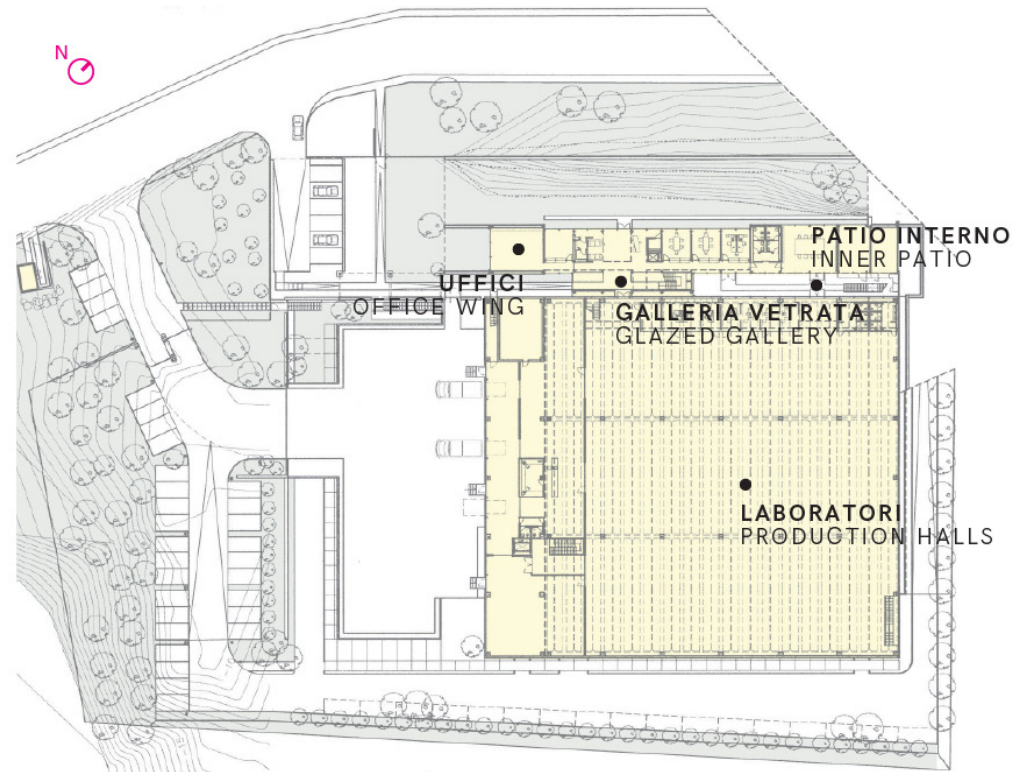
Chienti, in the heart of THE FAMOUS
SHOE-MANUFACTURING
DISTRICT that straddles the provinces of Fermo and
Macerata.

The building maintains a SOPHISTICATED
RELATION TO THE
LANDSCAPE.





PIANTA LIVELLO INFERIORE / PLAN OF THE LOWER LEVEL



PIANTA LIVELLO SUPERIORE / PLAN OF THE UPPER LEVEL

On one side it is almost encircled by ill-designed factories standing in a parcellisation devoid of architectural logic. On the other, it is nestled

in a vast context of GREAT

NATURAL

BEAUTY, found in the imagery

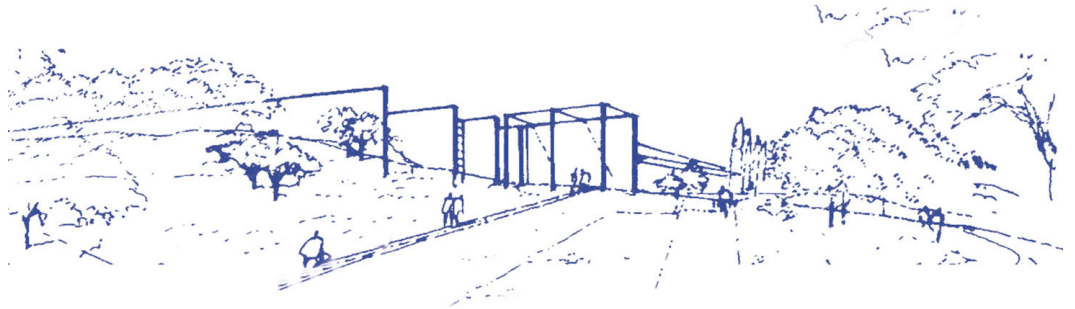
evoked in the poetry of Giacomo Leopardi, who came from this region. Thanks to a meticulously studied series of free-standing walls conceived as 'diaphragms' to the view, the sight lines of the people working inside are lengthened beyond the disorderliness of the foreground

and guided toward the DISTANT

HORIZON OF

SERENE HILLS.

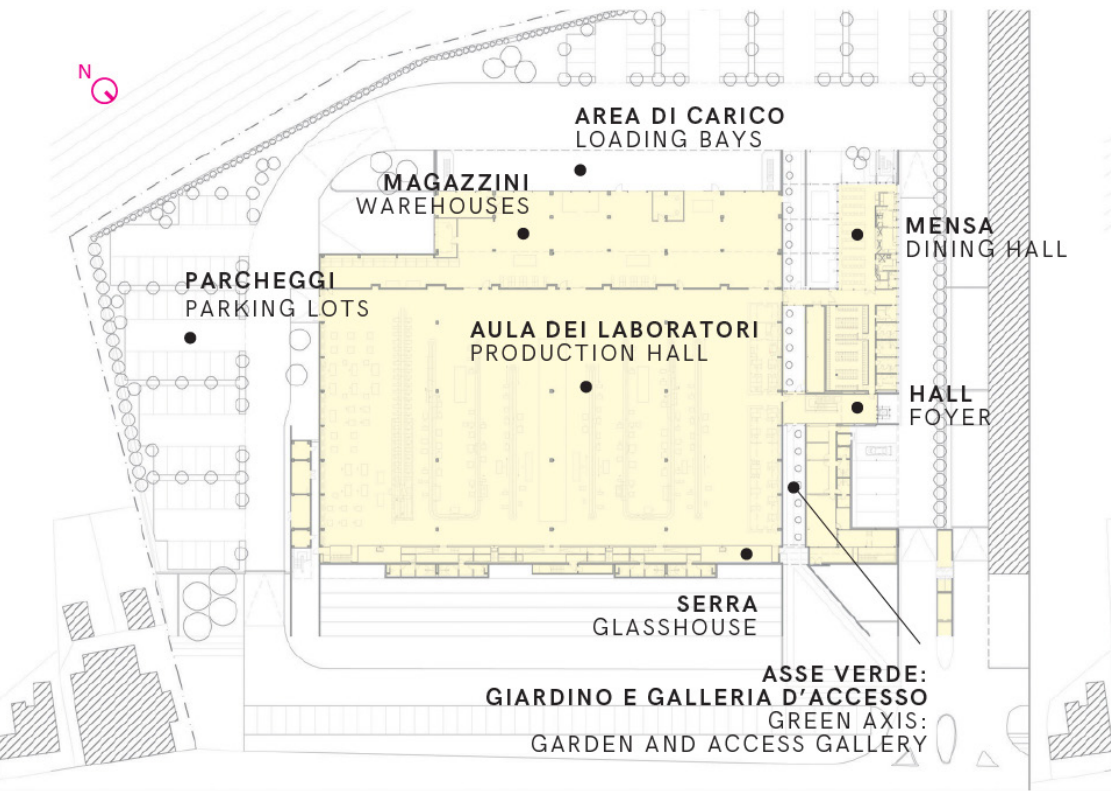




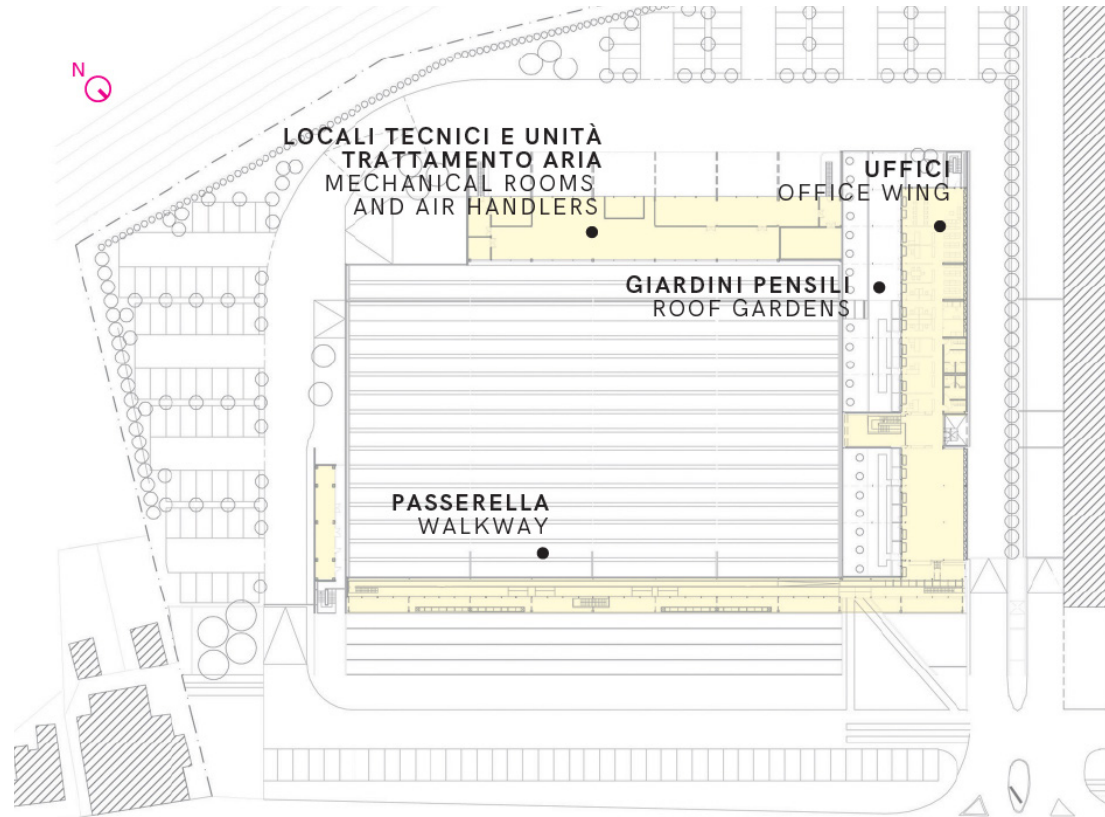
M O N T E V A R C H I

The factory complex lies **IN**
THE VALDARNO
VALLEY, of the river Arno in the province
of Arezzo, Tuscany, close to one of the historical Prada
plants in Buresta Levanella.





PIANO TERRA/ GROUND FLOOR



PRIMO PIANO / FIRST FLOOR

Here, where the old town has lost all recognisable identity and the built environment is a clashing mix, the industrial plant is a variation on

the theme of **INTROVERTED
ARCHITECTURE:**

closed toward the ragged fabric of the outside context and open on

the inside by **VIRTUE OF A
STRING OF GREEN
PATIOS AND
HIDDEN GARDENS.**





