



ROSSO E BIANCO

Martini's famous colours find a place in the drinks brand's refreshed Milan workspace, just downstairs from its glamorous Terrazza Martini rooftop bar

Words by Sonia Zhuravlyova

Images by Il Prisma

“The story of Martini is a very famous one in Italy,” says Michele Pini, the team leader at Il Prisma, the Italian design studio tasked with updating the Terrazza Martini in Milan. Housed on the top of a skyscraper in Piazza Diaz, built by prolific post-war architect Luigi Mattioni in 1956, the terrazza is the highest point overlooking Milan’s famous Duomo, the city’s ornate cathedral. Here high society would gather for aperitivo – the famous cocktail hour – and glittering parties, film and book launches as well as to enjoy unprecedented panoramas of the historic city centre. “Nobody knows the address of the tower, they just say: ‘Bring me to the tower of the Terrazza Martini’ and all the taxi drivers know where it is,” explains Pini. ☺

← Brass chandelier stems reveal subtle branding seen from the right angle



← Metallic curtains can be used to reconfigure space for privacy in the 15th floor lounge

↘ Marble, dark wood and warm brass in the 15th floor bar enhance the air of luxury

↘ Window seating on the 14th floor gives dramatic views over the Milan cityscape



Designer: Il Prisma
Client: Martini
Location: Milan
Duration: 2017 – May 2018
Floorspace: 1,100sq m

Although the 15th and 16th floors were always in use, the 14th had remained underdeveloped. In order to reinvigorate the brand and reposition it for the 21st century, Martini decided to turn the languishing space into a smart new office space where clients could meet and work during the day and then head upstairs to entertain their guests.

“The idea was to build up the brand equity in Milan but not think only about leisure moments like parties, but to have a place that is in line with a new generation of businessmen working here,” says Pini. “Milan is not only a place for aperitivo, it’s also a place that is open to the world. All the Italian companies have headquarters here – so why not have a business centre that could tell the Martini story at the same time?”

With that in mind, the architects and designers at Il Prisma, which won the contract in 2017, spent five months thinking

about how to create a brand home that weaves together a usable workspace with luxury and glamour long associated with Martini. Although the Terrazza Martini has had several facelifts over the years, the creatives at Il Prisma looked to the original project, designed by the architect Tomaso Buzzi (who trained and worked with Gio Ponti) in 1958, for reference. Both the business floor – and the lounge and bar upstairs – are united by soothing shades of brown and red to evoke the colours of Martini, with oxidised brass, marble and granite throughout.

Two private meeting rooms can be booked for as much time as required, while marble-topped tables, comfortable banquette seating – placed as booths in order to facilitate privacy – as well as snug red leather sofas have been installed. The furniture and fixtures were manufactured and installed by Italian

brand Effebi, which spared no expense: canaletto walnut and wenge wood, marble and warm brass all feature in the bespoke pieces. Up to 50 people can use the 650sq m space at any one time and access is granted via a membership scheme, which allows members to bring in guests. Lockers, a wardrobe service, wi-fi, coffee on tap and charging points are all provided.

The brief that Il Prisma answered was to tell the story of Martini, which was first manufactured in the mid-19th century near Turin, and to integrate the branding across the space with subtlety and a respect for heritage. Taking a playful approach, the designers created a customised wallpaper that uses images from iconic Martini advertising of the past. Il Prisma also hired graphic-design artist Alessandro Giorgini to create bespoke graphics for the walls, which reference the golden years of Martini. ☺



→ An elegant staircase links the workspace with the upstairs bars

Everything from the films of Federico Fellini, who held the premiere of *La Dolce Vita* here in 1960, to its Martini Racing teams and sponsorship of Formula 1 are featured in the graphics, which adorn the walls throughout.

The overarching concept – from the business centre up to the terrazza – is a process of discovery. The lounge on the 15th floor, for instance, has an interactive wall where fine drawings of ingredients and recipes for traditional Martini cocktails can be found. The glimmering chandelier, made from brass stems and LED lights, reveals the iconic “ball and bar” logo but only from a particular vantage point – blink and you miss it. “It’s a process of inserting branding into the space without putting too much emphasis on it,” says Pini.

Here a metallic curtain helps to reconfigure the space, creating areas for private events or business gatherings, while the marble flooring connects the space to the Duomo just beyond its windows.

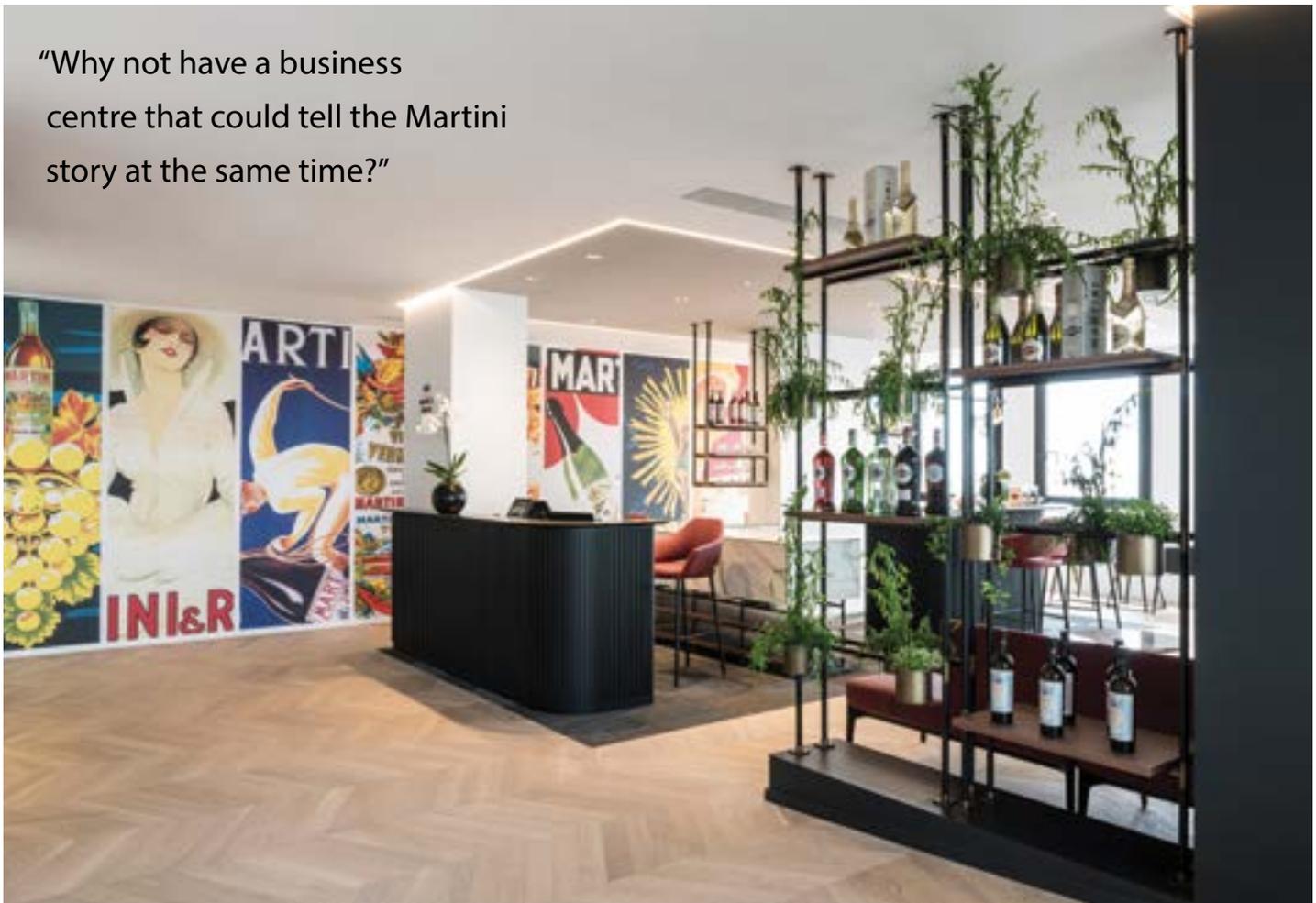
With an eye to the past, Il Prisma also restored the original windows on the 14th and 15th floors, which during past incarnations became partially covered by air-conditioning units. Meanwhile, on the 16th floor guests can catch the scent of aromatic lemon balm, peppermint and St John’s wort, which are used in the making of Martini (the entire line-up of ingredients remains a firmly held secret).

Although the production and HQ of Martini are near Turin, the drink’s brand home is firmly set in Milan. Throughout



→ The Botanical bar displays the herbs used in Martini’s drinks

“Why not have a business centre that could tell the Martini story at the same time?”



↑ Bespoke wallpaper shows iconic advertising

← Martini's red is seen in the skyscraper's famous rooftop bar



the 20th century the concept of the cocktail hour became so desirable that Martini opened its terrazzo in cities such as Paris, Barcelona, London, Brussels, Genoa and even São Paulo. Today one of the last terrazzo is in Milan, where Martini is focusing its energies on consolidating its brand identity. This was a place where history was made – and la dolce vita celebrated with gusto. And now it combines smart working with easy access to a well-earned drink to celebrate the day's achievements. It is exclusive without being aloof, and glamorous without being ostentatious. Salute! 🍷