



HANGAR

You can find this point of interest in Como - Path 5 - Stage 2

INFORMATION

Location: the Hangar overlooks Piazzale Somaini in Como

Paving: the widening at the entrance of the hangar is surfaced with asphalt

Architectural barriers: -

Access: access to the Hangar is from Piazzale Somaini. The premises of the Aero Club Como are located in the adjacent street, in viale Masia 44.

Services: parking available in the area

Leisure and Food: bars and cafes in the area; sports facilities; public park

DESCRIPTION

(*Ambra Garancini*)

Widespread interest for the activity of flying truly took off in Italy when, in the summer of 1929, the Reale Aero Club d'Italia (Royal Aero Club of Italy) encouraged the formation of the so-called "Air Tourism Squadrons", which also had the aim of keeping the Italian Air Force's reservists in practice.

Como, too, had been longing for its own Aero Club. The first hangar had been built back in 1927, near Villa Olmo, on the occasion of the celebrations for the centenary of the death of Alessandro Volta. There were many enthusiasts and aviators, including Giuseppe Terragni, and the promotional campaign by the Royal Aero Club of Italy represented the right opportunity to act.

During the first months of 1930, Terragni and other flight buffs created the Aero Club Como, entitling it to Giuseppe Ghislanzoni, the pilot from Calco killed in action during the First World War.

The Municipality of Como granted the land for the construction of the hangar, thanks to the involvement of the "podestà", engineer Negretti.

Many plans were presented, including that of architect Terragni, who, with the project called *«hangar for seaplanes, headquarters of the Aeroclub Como, and quarters for a squadron»* took part in the 2nd Exhibition of Rationalist architecture of 1931 in Rome.

As described in the technical report, the project consists of a hangar with *«nine - 14 metres high - parabolic arches»* used as a shelter for the planes. Next to it are the headquarters of the Aero Club, with a double-height room with a *«veranda wall overlooking the lake»*; on the back of the hangar stands a building with *«guardhouse, canteen, kitchen, dormitory with bathroom»*.

With reference to the layout of the buildings, the same technical report says that *«they were to be erected on a triangular-shaped area with one side parallel to the lakeshore: this led to the idea of locating the offices and meeting rooms next to the hangar. ...On the other hand, the service and shelter buildings were placed on the back, towards the city»*.

The solution for bonding the parabolic profile of the rib, required by the utility of the construction, and the volume of the building is found by extending the latter's prospect through the gutter line, protruding it enough to create a frame around the entrance of the hangar.

The plan was *«punctually rejected»* on the absurd grounds that it lacked a *«proper masking»* of the parabola. The assignment was thus granted to engineer Carlo Ponci, he, too, very closely connected to the Aero Club. Ponci is responsible for the current steel portal frame structure of the hangar. However, the construction of the hangar proved too expensive for the Aero Club; the Municipality of Como bore the costs for its completion and retained the ownership of the structures that were built, again designed by Ponci. In 1934 Terragni *«having been entrusted by the Council of the Ghislanzoni Aero Club, and in his capacity as chairman of the technical committee»* had drawn up the plan for *«the Club's headquarters»* and for the *«quarters of the military squadron»*. This is represented in the design drawings together with the currently existing hangar and is composed of two volumes: one parallel to the back of the hangar

containing the garage, the living room and the operational headquarters of the squadron, the other perpendicular to the first and hosting the quarters.

However, in actual fact, this part, too, was later completed (in 1935) by Ponci, who chose a solution volumetrically similar to that suggested by Terragni.

The Aero Club Como continues to manage to this day what once was the “Royal Airport Giuseppe Ghislanzoni”, now called the Idroscalo Internazionale di Como (Como International Seaplane Base). Officially recognized as Airport Traffic Zone, it is the only international airport on water in Europe.

In its capacity as airport managing body, the Aero Club operates under the Ministry of Transport and is controlled by the Malpensa Airport Department. As well as operating as a civil airport with its own fire-fighting structure, it performs services of civil protection, land protection, and customs and excise.

Like all the other buildings of the “citadel of sport”, the Hangar complex is protected by the Superintendence for Architectural and Landscape Heritage.

Quotes drawn from:

C. Baj, *Volare a Como*, Editoriale, casa editrice del Corriere di Como, Como 2009

Triennale di Milano e Centro Studi G. Terragni, in AA. VV, *Giuseppe Terragni*, Electa, Milano 1996

G. Ciucci, *Giuseppe Terragni Opera completa*, Electa, Milano 1996, ristampa 2001

B. Zevi, *Giuseppe Terragni*, Zanichelli, Bologna 1980, ristampa 1988