



NOVOCOMUM

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

INFORMATION

Location: the *Novocomum* complex is in Como, viale Sinigaglia 1

Paving: the pavement next to the entrance is surfaced with asphalt. The threshold before the main entrance and the eight steps of the side entrances are made of stone

Architectural barriers: the main entrance of viale Sinigaglia is preceded by a small threshold. The two side entrances, on the right and left corners of the building, are preceded by unprotected landings overlooking viale Sinigaglia. To access the landings one has to climb eight stone steps

Access: the main access is from viale Sinigaglia 1

Services: parking available in the area

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

Other information: the building is used as a private home; however, visits can be arranged by contacting the “Amici del *Novocomum*” society: tel. 031.572793; cavmar@tin.it

DESCRIPTION

The *Novocomum*, a work commissioned in 1927 to a very young Giuseppe Terragni (he was only twenty-three years old) by Elio Peduzzi, the managing director of the *Novocomum* building company from Olgiate Comasco, is also known as the “transatlantic liner” due to its shape and dimensions. Terragni, after submitting a classical-style project to the building commission, created a totally modern work, consisting of five floors which complete the block by joining with the pre-existing adjacent building designed by architect Cararchini. This “surprise action” caused a great scandal in town. Although at first it was decided that it would have to be demolished, the *Novocomum* was “saved” by the opinion of a special Commission set up by the Municipality, the far-sighted decision whereof enabled us to admire a building that is one of the true milestones of Rationalist architecture.

«When designing the *Novocomum*, Terragni repeatedly made reference to Cararchini’s building, suggesting the same dimensions and the same height, i.e five above-ground levels. The terraced covering of the *Novocomum* was originally higher than the pitched roof of the adjacent building, to which two additional floors were added only later on. The overall structure is relatively simple, comb-like, and obtained by drawing the minor buildings close to the main one, stretched along via Sinigaglia, where the complex has its entrance...The characterizing feature of the building lies in its corners, which are whittled away and replaced by a cylindrical volume at the entresol, third and fourth floor. While the second level keeps the maximum dimension of the building within a curvilinear movement, the fifth and top level is marked by an orthogonal angle, which dominates the semicircular room at the back of the lower level, albeit towering above the entire angular mass of the building... There are eight apartments on each floor, located according to the traditional scheme of a corridor with flats aligned on its two sides (www.lombardiabeniculturali.it).

Worthy of interest is the use of colour: Terragni chose hazelnut for the vertical surfaces of the façade, orange for juts and recesses, and light blue for the parallel lines of the iron parapets. The façade of the *Novocomum* had already lost its original colours by the Fifties with the application of tiny marble tesserae on the façade. Nonetheless, the most recent restoration work managed to bring back the original colour palette.

Although the *Novocomum* «does not overlook the lake, it is however in direct relationship with it. The very architecture of the building calls the lake to mind: its corners, consisting of multi-storey void cylinders, explicitly refer to the view and contemplation of the surrounding space, which the nearby waters further expand into the open. Having to measure itself against “unique” and “self-sufficient” places and spaces, such as the lake, the *Novocomum* does not elude the need to be modelled according to recognizable and extremely outright shapes. The prevailing image conveyed by the building is that of the modern home, the “machine for living in”.» (www.lombardiabeniculturali.it). The *Novocomum* is considered to be the first important example of Rationalist architecture in Italy, setting the standard for a new way of experiencing and thinking about the home and of living inside the city. It was set to be the home of the future.