INVITED PAPERS

Tower Versus Skyscrapers: Verticality in Milan Between Past and Future

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Introduction

Since the 1930s, Milan has been one of the few Italian cities to embrace tall buildings. And even today, it's essentially the only place in the country where skyscrapers continue to be built. The high-rises were imported to Europe in the first decades of the 20th Century. They were not aimed at solving practical and spatial problems, but rather at satisfying the wish to modernize architecture and cities. Thus, skyscrapers were more a symbol, a metaphor for modernity, than a solution to urban issues.

In Italy, the American typology took on features inspired by traditional history and culture, starting from the medieval patterns of towers. It is no coincidence that the first Italian skyscrapers were called towers or 'torrioni', meaning great towers. Also concerning the materials and the structure, the Italian tall buildings were very different from the American ones: the traditional use of reinforced concrete and a better understanding of its properties than steel, led to constructions with a very different structure to the original Chicago skyscrapers, usually built using a steel skeleton. This paper aims to highlight the distinctive features of the Italian – and therefore Milanese – towers, erected from the Thirties to the present day, focusing on the approach of local culture and indigenous architects to the tall building typology.

Piacentini's first experiments

In Italy, the skyscraper was born during the Fascist period, in the wake of the international influence exercised by the Chicago School. This architectural type found particular impetus in the competition for the Chicago Tribune Tower in 1922. Many European architects took part in this competition, like Adolf Loos, Walter Gropius, Bruno Taut, as well as some Italian designers as Giuseppe Boni – not very well known but the only Italian one to have received a mention – and the later architect of the Fascist Regime, Marcello Piacentini, who will conceive, at the end of the Twenties, the first Italian skyscraper (Talenti, Teodosio, 2020). The building planned by Piacentini for the Chicago Tribune Tower used classical language and was composed of a combination of stacked blocks. The Italian culture emerged especially in the stylistic and ornamental aspects, like the clock on the facade and the sculptures with bronze horses echoing the Venetian San Marco. Overall, the project combined American and Italian characters by blending the image of the US skyscraper with the European bell tower model.

This competition probably had a great impact also in Italy, where this topic became an object of discussion and not only among specialists. Thus, many architects, such as Piacentini himself, engaged design research on this architectural type. At the beginning, he seemed doubtful about the convenience of building skyscrapers in Italy, where the price of land was not particularly high, whereas the cost of constructing tall buildings was considerable. Moreover, Piacentini underlined some other issues. In Italian cities, the erection of skyscrapers could have altered the appearance of the ancient centers and their perception. The relationship and integration between these new tall buildings and the architectural historical heritage would not have been easy. He thought that even the change in the skyline of these cities might have shocked the Italians' minds. So, in 1923 he wrote: "No skyscrapers in Italy: neither the economic reasons suggest them, nor the aesthetic ones allow them» (Piacentini, 1922-23, 317).

But little by little, he realized that the skyscraper was a great opportunity to change the urban and building regulations of Italian cities, avoiding the boring sequence of identical buildings. Thus, in the early 1930s, he became the designer of the first Italian skyscraper, the 13-story INA Tower building (National Insurance Institute, 1928-1932) in Brescia, a city not far away from Milan (Pacini, 1932). It was one of the several buildings facing the new Victoria's square: a square born from the demolition of a part of the medieval urban neighborhood and used to restore a run-down district as well as to connect the two main areas of the city. The place was not conceived to be a simple transit area, but as a traditional square, dedicated to rest and entertainment. Piacentini adapted his proposal originally submitted in 1922 to the competition for the Chicago Tribune Tower, simplifying lines and ornamentation. He did not want to imitate the American skyscraper, and the different solutions he imagined proved his perplexities and his strong self-critical spirit. Only the volume was inspired by the US examples, while the style and the materials were different. The link with history, as embodied by its inclusion in the urban skyline between medieval towers and Renaissance domes, was also explained by its name, 'Torrione' ('Great tower'), which placed it in the Italian tradition of great medieval towers. This skyscraper was about 57 meters high, had a reinforced concrete structure, and was surrounded on three sides by a covered walkway. Its use was mixed: the ground floor was dedicated to offices, while the body of the tower had a residential function and was crowned by a penthouse with a panoramic restaurant. The main facade, which overlooked the square, was marked by 12 arches that framed two levels. Between the windows were placed 12 terracotta basreliefs - now lost - which represented the production activities in Brescia, thus testifying to the constant search for links with the history of the region. A wise choice of colors and materials also showed an attempt to integrate with the context: the ground floor arcade, supported by granite columns, was covered with stone, while the central body was finished with a complex texture of light-colored bricks specially produced for this occasion. The innovative character of the building was due not only to the dimensions but also to some constructive solutions (foundations with insulated monolithic plate, support wall) and technical innovations (four elevators, water pumping systems, lighting) that required the intervention also of some engineers.

This Tower represented Piacentini's approach, his personal Regime's style where classical and monumental elements were combined with modern and functional ones, and it constituted the first authentic interpretation of the theme of the American skyscraper in Italy. This high-rise had a great media impact on the Italian architectural scene, as evidenced by many publications of the period that always emphasized the primacy in height of this building in Italy and in Europe.

Debate shifted to Milan

During the period between the two World Wars, the Italian debate on tall buildings shifted to Milan where it has remained until today (Alfonsi, 1986). The SNIA Viscosa Tower, the first tower in Milan, was built in 1937 and designed by Alessandro Rimini (Disertori, 2002). It displayed the continuity with the tradition and the link with the urban pattern that had inspired Piacentini's design in Brescia. Milan's skyline has been characterized by verticality since the remote past: from the fortified walls of the Roman period to the spire of the Cathedral - to which the Madonnina sculpture had been added in the 18th century - from the Filarete's Tower of the Renaissance Castle to the gasometers and chimneys of the early 20th century, ending with the 108-meter high Littoria Tower (then called Branca Tower) in Parco Sempione, built in 1933. This Tower, which was commissioned by Mussolini and designed in 1932 by Gio Ponti, was an exception in Italy at this time (D'Orazio). It was not a real skyscraper but a symbolic building, designed to celebrate the magnificence and the modernity of the Fascist Regime. The novelty concerned the use of steel - not popular nor well-known in Italy - because the tower employed tubular elements produced by a Milanese Company, although the Regime had always encouraged autochthonous materials.

The first authentic skyscraper was the SNIA Tower, where, to harmonize the new building more closely with the features of Milan's urban characters, the architect opted for lines (the square windows, for example) and materials, which emphasized the tower's horizontality – as in the Piacentini's Brescia tower – while the balconies on the short side stressed the verticality of the volume crowned by two recessed levels which underlined its silhouette and its towered character. Here, the engineer Guido Mettler used reinforced concrete and the journals of the time emphasized the plasticity and versatility of this material.

Even after the Second World War, despite the progress of structural engineering, the Italian skyscrapers were designed employing reinforced concrete structures. Nevertheless, the use of steel or reinforced concrete continued to be one of the major topics and debates about Milanese skyscrapers.

The Milanese post-World War II period

In Milan, more than anywhere else, the tall buildings spread in the post-war period in different areas and not only in the historical center (Coppa, Tenconi, 2015). The skyscraper seemed to be the solution to many of the city's problems, not only allowing air and light to enter the living spaces but also favoring a good orientation of the buildings, freeing up space for urban greenery, traffic and parking. So, the high-rise represented not only modernity but also a possible rational and functional solution to the density of housing in Lombardy's capital city and the unhealthiness of its enclosed courtyard buildings. However, the introduction of this typology did not cause any break with the local traditions – including the constructive materials such as the reinforced concrete, which, for practical and economic reasons, was preferred over steel. The skyscrapers that became popular in Milan from the 1940s onwards had their physiognomy and were not simple American-style skyscrapers, such as an example Piero Bottoni's Palazzo Argentina (1946-51): a mixed-use building, with stores on the first levels and 11-story residential tower located perpendicular to the street. Set back from the street line but formally linked to the crossroads through the lower part of the building, Bottoni designed the building to free the ground and guarantee more air and light, destroying "both the representative façade facing the street and the closed rear courtyard, typical elements of the 19th-century urban construction" (Veronesi, 1959, 445).

The Breda Tower built between 1953 and 1955 by the architect Luigi Mattioni - and famous for being the first to cross the threshold of the Madonnina high on the cathedral roof also expressed a strong rejection of monotony (Alfonsi, Zucconi, 1985). The bow windows on one side and the terraces on the other one, the use of color on the facade covered with turquoise ceramic stoneware, and the shades fading towards the top, the building's specific formal identity: all these elements are evidence of the search for an exceptional and original solution that would make it an important landmark. Most of the tall buildings of the post-World War II period in Milan had these peculiarities: such as the unique and atypical experiment of the Park Tower (1953-56) designed by Vico Magistretti, one of the educated architects of the 1950s, endowed with a great civic passion (Pedio, 1960). In his design, Magistretti reinterpreted the principle of 'stacked villas' - a popular housing type in Milan back then where each floor is identical on the outside, but arranged differently inside - and adapted it to the skyscraper's proportions. The four façades are all different from each other thanks to the varied positioning of the living rooms and loggias, which made this skyscraper absolutely different from the system based on the replication of floors typical of American high-rises. The colors planned in the first design - but not achieved - should have also contributed to underlining its difference from the others buildings, making it unique. However, there were also some examples of tall buildings in the post-war reconstructed Milan which tended to be more in line with the American model, especially when they were part of some real estate new projects, linked to the plan of the emerging business centers. The 109-meter Galfa Tower (1956-59) designed by Melchiorre Bega and intended to house offices for an oil company, was formally very similar to the US type (Coppa, 2015; Greco, Mornati, 2012). It was part of the plan for a new business center which was never fully executed. The curtain wall, also used in the corners, created a completely transparent shell, bringing the Milan experiment into line with the spectacular transparencies of American skyscrapers. Even the interior layout, based on open space and the concept of flexibility, was clearly echoing the overseas type. So, in the first design, an American steel frame had been envisaged, but the structural engineer Luigi Antonietti rejected this metal proposal and used the more traditional reinforced concrete.

Towards more complex and attractive shapes

If we consider the skyscrapers built in Milan during the second half of the Fifties, we find more complex and attractive shapes, often the result of sophisticated experimentation on structural frames. This is especially evident in two buildings: the Velasca Tower (1950-58) and the Pirelli skyscraper (1953-60). They can be considered the most important high-rises of the reconstruction period, and today they represent, perhaps even better than the gothic cathedral, the symbols of Milan. They were both designed to be unique and, although extremely different in character, to represent innovation and change. The metaphor of modernity, expressed through new techniques, has in fact here replaced any economic reason linked to high land rent that was the origin of the construction of American skyscrapers.

The Velasca Tower, the most debated skyscraper in Europe, was designed by BBPR, a team of Milanese architects (Banfi, Belgiojoso, Peressutti, Rogers) (Samonà, 1959). Studies for the design of the Velasca Tower began in 1950 with the collaboration of the Turinese engineer Arturo Danusso. The new tall building was erected in a central neighborhood damaged by the bombing of the war, not far from the medieval Cathedral. The first proposal in 1952 envisaged a steel structure, designed by a construction company based in New York, but, due to the high costs, this idea was abandoned (Bordogna, 2017). A reinforced concrete structure was then chosen, because this material was more easily available in Italy, cheaper, and the local experts knew how to use it better than steel. Then, the engineer Arturo Danusso designed a structure in reinforced concrete with a central bracing core, which included stairwells and elevators, and a perimeter frame with rigid knots composed of sixteen jutting pillars that run the entire height of the facades. This structural solution was particularly innovative and it's still considered to be optimal for very tall buildings. In fact, it was also used later for some high-rise buildings in Chicago and more recently for the Burj Khalifa in Dubai (Parker & Wood, 2013).

A series of compressed inclined struts and horizontal elements supported the crowning of the building, consisting of 7 floors and technical volumes, protruding from the main body. The upper part of the building had a larger floor plan than the levels below because it housed the living spaces. According to the architects, the private dwellings needed more floor space than the offices below. But the designers also wanted to create a kind of formal separation between the two different functions – offices and apartments – of the building. All the faces of the tower are similar and marked by the ribs of the load-bearing structure, intentionally highlighted. The walls are punctuated by small rectangular windows arranged according to a grid suggested by the structural frame. The curtain walls are made of prefabricated panels of cement and pink sandstone. Even the use of a specific color was the result of a very particular design choice.

In this building, the search for a relationship with the local context and traditions is evident: the peculiar 'mushroom' morphology of the crowning is intended to recall medieval towers or Filarete's tower in the Sforzesco castle. But the attempt to tie in with the urban center is also clear in the shape of the windows, the color of the façades, the pitched roof – echoing housing typology – and even the arrangement of the square with a porticoed entrance. So the Velasca's architecture seems to express a clear opposition to the American type and an attempt to overcome the Rationalist movement.

If the design elements of the Velasca Tower arose from the context in which it was placed, the Pirelli skyscraper project - certainly one of the most significant and original Italian skyscrapers - was based on a very different concept, which is evident already from the denomination: tower for Velasca and skyscraper for Pirelli. Gio Ponti, who was the designer working with some engineers, as Pier Luigi Nervi and Arturo Danusso, disregarded the city pattern and designed the building as a thin slab that is placed in an irregular (trapezoidal) area, not aligning it with the existing streets, but in a perpendicular position to the front of the railway station, to declare its urban role and to stand out among the other buildings (Ponti, 1956; Coppa, Tenconi, 2015). The skyscraper with its pure form was intended to represent the powerful Milanese reality of its time. The elegant shape was organized as a tapered slab and had an extremely narrow plan (the width is 18.5m, the length 70.4m). For this reason, the engineers Danusso and Nervi, abandoned the traditional frame, developing an innovative structure with rigid triangular partitions at the ends of the building, some hollow pillars, and four large central pillars with a butterfly section. These big pillars were tapered upwards and were able to withstand even horizontal stresses. The load-bearing structure is perfectly understandable even from the outside. In fact, the pillars reappear in the faces made of glass, aluminum, and small mosaic tiles. Ponti and Nervi's idea was to create an architectural form which was the outcome of the construction itself. So, it is clear that this building is essentially different from all those skyscrapers being built in the US at that time: here the volume cannot be expanded infinitely thanks to the type-plan repetition. In fact, the butterfly pillars taper going up and make the structure and the shape not expandable. The volume is closed: a kind of finished, unchangeable architecture, the result of an idea design that tried to crystallize in a pure diamond shape the equilibrium between form and function.

Although profoundly different, Velasca and Pirelli best represent the Italian approach to the introduction of the American skyscraper typology: on the one hand, there is the importance of the relationship with local history and tradition; on the other, the search for a perfect, unique and finished form that cannot be further developed and would be very difficult to imitate.

After the most significant experiences of the Second Post-war Period, the 1960s saw the construction of various high-rises in Milan, often with a residential function, frequently located outside the historical center, and with an architectural impact not very impressive. Later, the 70s definitively sanctioned the skyscraper's exit from the scene: the demand changed, especially in the residential area, but also the symbolic meaning of the tall building, which by now no longer represented an ideal of modernity or the status symbol of the economic miracle of the Milanese bourgeoisie.

The current Milanese scene

After the millennium eve, since the 2000s there has been a socalled new 'vertical fever' in Milan, especially in some areas completely redeveloped, such as Porta Nuova or City Life districts. In recent decades, the challenges of skyscrapers are not only related to height – which, in Italy, was not so important – but more often to the issue of the sustainability of tall buildings (Talenti, Teodosio, 2021). So far, in Milan, many skyscrapers have been built and many others are under construction, and many designs have been submitted. This great enthusiasm for high-rise typology has also brought foreign, often American, designers onto the field. But one can question the existence or not of a typically Italian skyscraper and whether local architects have a different approach to international ones.

The skyscrapers built by American architects such as Gioia 22 (by the designer Gregg Jones of the studio of César Pelli) (Talenti, 2021) or the Unicredit building designed by Pelli himself are very often a structural or technical challenge (Molinari, 2015). Both are in a new district of Milan, totally transformed, the Porta Nuova District. In Gioia 22, called the 'Shard of glass', we can notice the defiance of gravity. In the Unicredit Tower (2014), the most challenging part of the construction is the pierced steel spire placed at the top in an eccentric position to the body of the building. Its construction needed the use of a helicopter and required considerable static studies. This spiral structure has a strong expressive value, echoing the Madonnina on the top of Milan's cathedral. Looking at sustainability, this building was also the first Italian pilot project to obtain the US Green Building Council's Leed Gold certification. The structural challenge is also clearly evident in the design of the Hadid Tower (2014-2017) (Giuliani, 2017). This skyscraper is placed in another important area of great transformation and where also some skyscrapers were recently built: the City Life District, once a fairground occupied by old buildings. The so-called 'twisted tower' by Zaha Hadid, with its rotation and form that tapers upwards, is a perfect example of the synthesis between an architectural idea and a challenging structural solution and testifies to the ongoing research in innovative structural systems. All these skyscrapers, including the PwC Power (2015-2020), designed by Daniel Libeskind, benefitted from advances in construction technology, improvements to energy performance levels, and more conscious use of environmental resources and choice of materials.

Very often, the Milanese tall buildings designed by foreign architects have a glazed surface and are often based on modular replication, infinitely extendable, as for example in the Allianz Tower (2012-2015) by Arata Isozaki, erected in the same area of the previous two towers (Biagi, 2015). The skyscraper was conceived as a mixed structure in reinforced concrete and steel and it is based on a construction module, indefinitely repeatable, consisting of a 6-story element. This tower would like to be a tribute to Milanese futurism, showing the idea of a 'building as a machine', with exposed gears that are in constant movement. But also some Italian architects were active in these areas, the most remarkable result being Stefano Boeri's Bosco Verticale

(2009-14) in the Porta Nuova district (Boeri, Musante, 2015). It represents the symbol of vertical sustainability played on the use of greenery. In 2014 it was honored with the prestigious International High-rise Award, assigned by the German Architecture Museum of Frankfurt to the most beautiful and innovative tall building in the world and it is still considered one of the most iconic skyscrapers in Italy. For watering, the greenery on the terraces uses rainwater and the greywater produced by the building itself, in addition, an innovative eco-structure monitoring system and a sub-irrigation with independent management for small groups of tanks, allow consumption to be adjusted to real needs, which vary according to exposure and heights. The experience of Boeri's Vertical Forest is considered particularly significant in this regard and has become famous all over the world as the prototype intervention of a new biodiversity architecture since the two residential towers were designed as a noise barrier as well as to improve air quality, reduce pollution, limit radiation by creating a microclimate on a human scale, also affecting urban heat islands. The facades, with large staggered balconies with strong overhangs, host over one hundred plant species, being 800 trees, 4,500 shrubs, and about 15,000 ornamental essences, differentiated according to the exposure: evergreen to the south, stripping to the north and west, with soft shades to the east. This greenery becomes the protagonist of the architectural project, making the faces periodically 'variable' and changeable depending on the season and climate. But if the Bosco Verticale is a "new idea of a skyscraper, in which trees and humans coexist" (Menaldo, 2014) as Boeri has repeatedly emphasized, the residential complex, however, brings up some critical issues. Doubts arise about the actual sustainability of the operation, both in the construction phase, concerning costs and energy for the installation of trees and shrubs, and in the lifelong management, but also on the elitist approach of the project which seems to move vegetation from public and shared spaces to those private and used by few, risking to transform it into a simple ornament to be admired. But, despite criticism of its maintenance and flat costs, the Vertical Forest is an innovative Italian idea for the use of greenery, that has now been copied all over the world. Also original is the solution of the double towers, of different shapes and heights, which create a changing play of volumes depending on the selected point of view.

Another building is currently under construction: Mario Cucinella's Unipol Tower, nicknamed the 'vertical nest' (Mario Cucinella, 2017). Inside the building, the vegetation is not only conceived as a 'dressing' designed to refine and embellish the architecture, but it performs a clear and important oxygenating function like a huge 'green lung'. The project develops around a covered square where private and public areas try to merge, creating a large covered winter garden that opens onto the city. The system includes a series of suspended natural spaces (about 445 square meters) and, at the top, a panoramic greenhouse – intended to host exhibitions and events – which will allow the building's internal temperature to be managed without artificial ventilation systems. The landscape project, conceived by the architect Marilena Baggio, collaborator of

the Cucinella studio, constitutes a sort of narration of the various manifestations of the plant world, following the cultural paradigm of the trilogy of Canti described by Dante Alighieri in the Divine Comedy: level +1 represents Paradise, levels +19-21 Purgatory, levels + 22-23 Hell, with the large greenhouse (Baggio, 2017). Going up, in the opposite direction of Dante's route, the Mediterranean scrub is replaced by the tropical one, reaching the sub-desert landscape on the 23rd floor. The Color, size, and shape of the different species, closely related to their location in the tower and to the different functions of the areas, will allow the visitor to locate himself in the altimetric space during his ascent to 'hell'. The complex design choices, obviously, do not neglect a careful search for "performance in terms of hydraulic functionality, water saving, soil management and durability with low maintenance" (Baggio, 2018, 25) to contribute to the sustainability of the skyscraper. But the most important aspect of this skyscraper is the envelope built thanks to the diagrid system: a framework of diagonally intersecting metal that requires less structural steel than a conventional steel frame. These metal rods constitute the perimeter support structure of the building, which is then wrapped externally in a transparent skin designed to reflect light. The structural element thus also becomes an aesthetic element, creating a façade that reminds one of the intertwinings of branches in a nest. The quest for integration between art and technique, or rather between form and structure, started by Ponti and Nervi, but also by BBPR with Danusso, still seems to be relevant.

Conclusions

From Piacentini's very first experiments, the Italian skyscraper shows all its distance from the original American typology: neither height, excessive originality of silhouette, nor pure technical and structural challenges, seem to be the hallmarks of the towers/skyscrapers designed by Italian architects. But some distinctive elements seem to appear frequently in the several tall buildings in Milan. First of all, the search for modernity was always combined with the genius loci, which is the pervading spirit of the place. The connection with the urban context through the lower part of the building, often designed with arcades, is a repeated element, especially in the first Italian experiments. Today's Italian trend is to create open ground floors conceived as public spaces.

The choice of reinforced concrete represents another specific feature of the skyscraper erected on Italian soil. Very rare are those made entirely of steel. Concrete continues to dominate for the construction of all structural elements and not just for cores and shear walls even if, increasingly frequent is the mixed structure. The peculiarity of Italian skyscrapers is not limited, however, only to the structural techniques used for the construction of the skeleton. The deep link of the structure with the design language and the adoption of elegant structural solutions also contribute to characterizing these works. The buildings often stand out for their strong but elegant character. In the Velasca tower, for example, the structure plays a key role in defining the characteristic mushroom shape. Although with different formal results, we found the same connection between advanced engineering solutions and architectural envelope, from the Pirelli skyscraper to the more recent 'nest' by Cucinella. This way of conceiving the design of a tall building may in part stem from the tradition of Italian engineering. In fact, in Italy, Danusso and Nervi were promoters of a renewed unity between the competencies of the architect, engineer, and builder. It was an approach related to the belief that the project was the result of a synthesis process, which required the involvement of the engineer right from the conception phase of the work and not in the mere subsequent verification. So, the value of these buildings, from Velasca to Pirelli, is also that of having put together technical knowledge and skills that had been separated until then (Colaianni 2002) and of having encouraged the search for innovative solutions able to combine structural, formal and functional aspects. In the USA, on the contrary, after the Second World War, the architect was given the role of coordinator of the design team, where we find the structural engineer together with the plant engineer, the environmental engineer, the expert in estimates and building regulations. Pragmatically, American engineers took on the role of guarantors of the validity of the structural calculation and, above all, of the financial investment, with the consequent complete separation of the professional fields. In short, they were no longer designers, but consultants.

Besides this approach according to engineers a very important role in designing Italian skyscrapers, it's important to remember also the specific methods used by Italian professionals, in the Fifties, for structural design and verification. While engineers who designed American skyscrapers in Chicago or New York used analytical tools for calculating the structures, the Italian approach for structural verification was based on a new methodology based on laboratory tests and the use of model experiments (achieved in a specific laboratory in Bergamo) (Neri, 2014). For Danusso, who had a key role especially in the Velasca skyscraper, "the model was the only means by which to bypass the limits of the theory of construction science and to verify one's own static intuition, an indispensable and preferential skill in the tortuous process of defining a structural form" (Neri, 2015, 315). Danusso aimed to go beyond analytical calculation as the only tool for dimensioning structures. The model tests allowed to avoid the typical simplifications of the purely mathematical approach and to consider all the interactions between the parts of the skeleton (Capurso, 2020).

The American common features of skyscrapers were the steel framework, the curtain wall, and, of course, the search for height. The Italian specificity is that none of these elements were used in the local towers or high-rises until a few decades ago, except in a few, occasional, cases. In fact, even the height, in Italy, was not and is not such an imperative factor. The Italian challenge is not about seeking a stunning height, but the uniqueness of the work. The Park Tower is the perfect example to understand how Italian architects have always kept a close link with the local culture – the stacked villas of the Milanese tradition, in this case – while seeking maximum flexibility and distributive freedom. The anonymous overlapping of identical

floors, the structural challenge, and unbridled height are replaced, in the examples designed by Italian professionals, by the search for original, identifiable, non-repetitive formal solutions, linked to the context and intimately connected to the structure, creating high-rises that stand out from the others, because of details rather than gaudy solutions. But nowadays, increasingly, the designers of Milanese skyscrapers are coming from abroad. Thus, the municipal administration dealing with urban issues fears that foreign artists lose their connection with the context. For this reason, it is trying to have more control over the future construction of high-rises. It aims to make the new skyscrapers fit into their surrounding urban context because the tall building has a kind of extra 'responsibility': standing out in the city, it immediately becomes the icon of a district. So, the current Milanese town planning advisor is convinced that the development of tall buildings must be accompanied by new rules (Venni, 2022). Skyscraper projects for Milan are increasingly flooding the pages of the newspapers, showing how this overseas typology has found fertile ground in Lombardy's capital, without however breaking away from Italian culture and tradition.



Figure 1. Snia Viscosa Tower (Image by Simona Talenti)



Figure 2. Velasca Tower (Image by Simona Talenti)



Figure 3. Park Tower (Image by Simona Talenti)



Figure 4. Park Tower (Image by Simona Talenti)



Figure 5. Bosco Verticale (Image by Simona Talenti)



Figure 6. Unipol Tower (Image by Simona Talenti)

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