

TWO

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IDENTITIES

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TOGETHER

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CONSTANT DIALOGUE BETWEEN OLD AND NEW

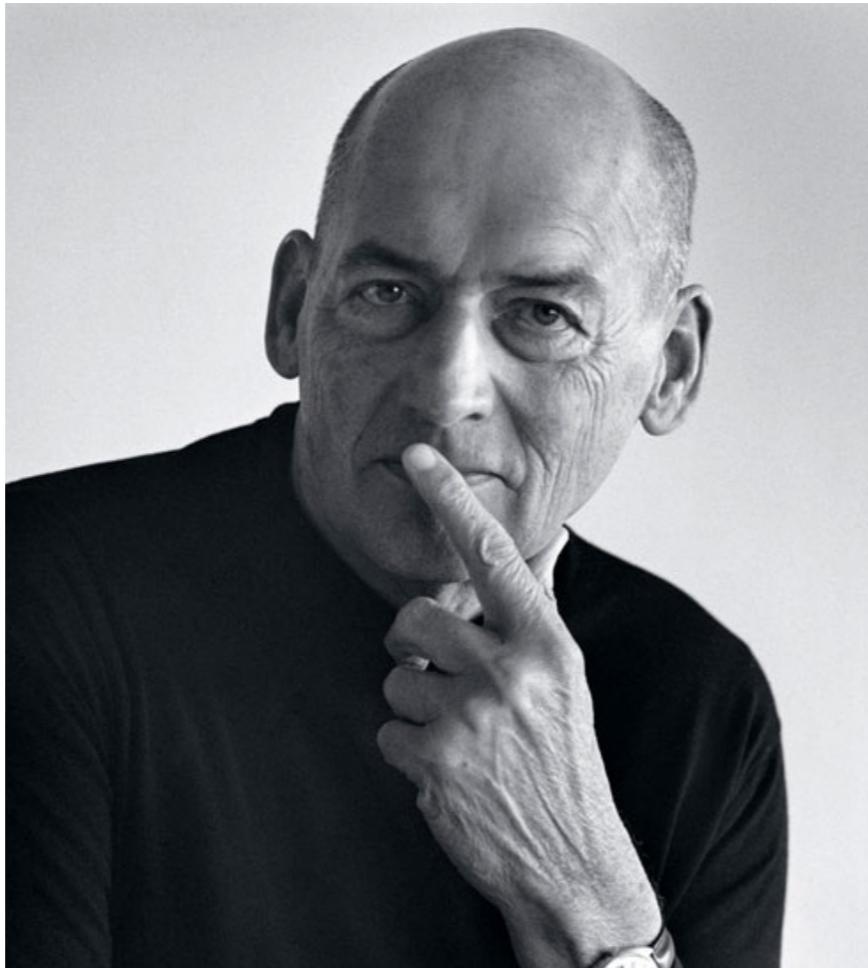
“The design is planned to stay true to the original footage of the rooms, and the historical elements have remained intact”

HISTORY IN DIFFERENT LAYERS...

First constructed in 1228, and located at the foot of the Rialto Bridge across from the fish market, the Fondaco dei Tedeschi is one of Venice's largest and most recognizable buildings. The 72,355-square-foot structure was used as a trading post for German merchants, a customs house under Napoleon, and a post office under Mussolini. Depicted by Canaletto and other masters, and photographed countless times as the impressive but anonymous backdrop of the Rialto bridge, the Fondaco stands as a mute witness of the Venetian mercantile era, its role diminished with the progressive depopulation of Venice.

Twice destroyed by fire and rebuilt (in its current form in 1506), manipulated in the 18th Century, and then subject to a series of radical architectural interventions in the 20th Century to accommodate the central post office under the fascist regime, the Fondaco quietly embodies Venice's secret brutality. Almost entirely reconstructed with modern concrete technology during 1930s, the Fondaco is a historical palimpsest of modern substance, its preservation spanning five centuries of construction techniques.

“Rather than a nostalgic reconstruction project, the restoration continues the fondaco’s tradition of vitality and adaptation, adding another chapter to the building’s incomparable history”



... AND A NEW LIFE IN DIFFERENT MATERIALS

In 2008 the company Benetton acquired the building of the city of Venice, and commissioned Rem Koolhaas (OMA's Group) the project of conversion in a lavish, high-end shopping center, being finished in 2016.

OMA's renovation scheme is based on a finite number of strategic interventions and vertical distribution devices that support the new program and define a sequence of public spaces and

paths. Each intervention is conceived as an excavation through the existing mass, liberating new perspectives and unveiling the real substance of the building to its visitors, as an accumulation of authenticities. It avoids nostalgic reconstructions of the past and it demystifies the 'sacred' image of a historical building. OMA's redesign of the four-story Fondaco is nothing less than extraordinary, as Koolhaas and his team have created a space that brilliantly balances the old with the new, like exposing the old brick walls in certain areas, maintaining the original archways and untouched corner rooms, and incorporating

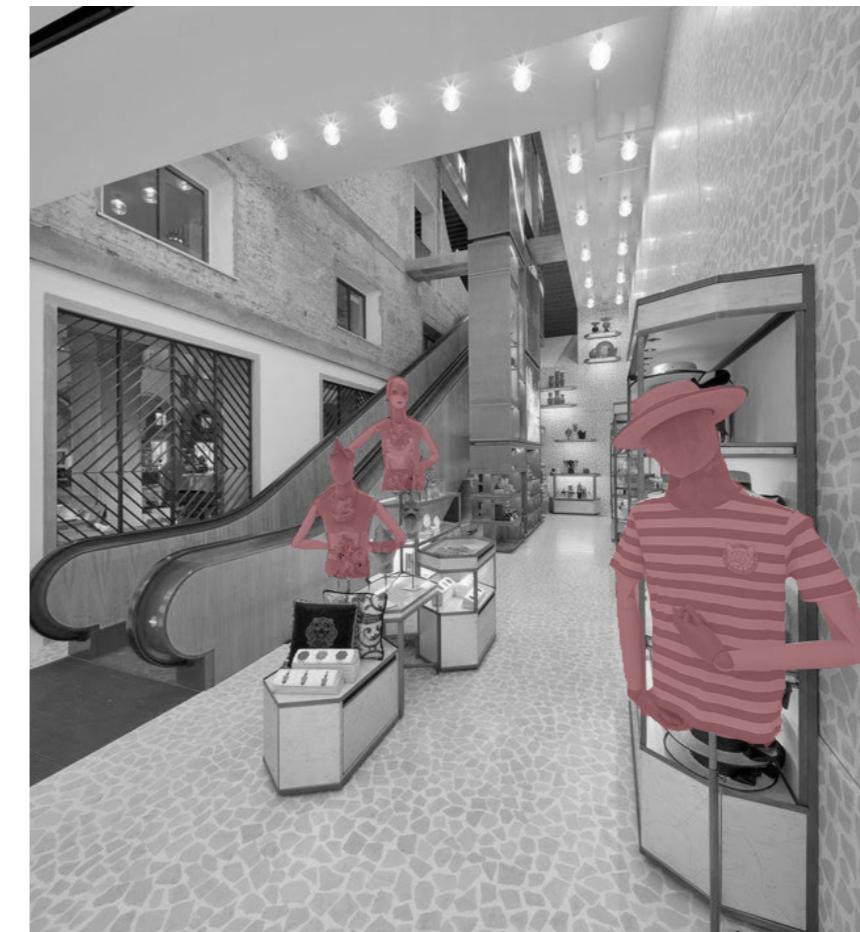
classic terrazzo floors. Also of note are the eye-popping bright red escalators paneled in light wood and detailed with brass.

The project also involved the disposition of the foundations and technical systems, the adaptation of the routes, a careful recovery of the original preserved construction and the material footprints of the activities that took place in the old Fondaco and the stair reconfiguration. The process that led to the completion of the work has been one of the most challenging restoration and recovery interventions carried out in recent years.

SHOPS

Connecting with the original vocation of the edifice, il Fondaco dei Tedeschi features an exceptional collection of luxury products from major brands. Discerning visitors to Venice will find an inspiring array of fashion and accessories, jewelry and watches, wines and spirits, fragrances and beauty products. In addition, the Fondaco proposes a carefully curated selection of locally handcrafted artisan products, as well as the restaurant AMO, developed by Italy's well-known Alajmo family, whose son Massimiliano is the youngest chef in the world to have received three Michelin stars.

Il Fondaco dei Tedeschi places strong emphasis on culture too, with an entire floor dedicated to exhibitions and events open to the public, creating a new cultural hub for Venetians and tourists alike.





“Our vision was to create a wonderful journey through the building, with each level bringing new images and materials, responding to its historic context, its product range and the city of Venice itself, creating a constant dialogue between old and new”

Mute witness of the most important epoch of Venice as a mercantile center, had so far a diminished and transformed role.

The project-composed of architecture and programming-opens to the plaza patio for pedestrians, keeping its historical role of urban 'field' covered. This is the main element of the building and everything revolves around it. The new entrances to the building are created from Campo San Bartolomeo and the Rialto; the existing entrances to the courtyard, used by the locals as a direct access, have been preserved. Escalators have been added to create a new public route through the building and the spaces are consolidated in a way that respects the original sequences; crucial historical elements such as the corner rooms remain intact. Some aspects of the building, lost for centuries, have been resurrected: the walls of the galleries will be again a surface of frescoes, reappearing in

contemporary form. The Fondaco dei Tedeschi will unlock its potential as a major destination and vantage point for tourists and Venetians alike; a contemporary urban department store staging a diverse range of activities, from shopping to cultural events, social gatherings and everyday life. OMA's renovation, both subtle and ambitious, continues the Fondaco's tradition of vitality and adaptation, its preservation yet another chapter of the building's illustrious and multi-layered history. This is the reason for the spaces used for exhibitions and cultural activities open to the public: places for both residents and travelers.

then...



...now



IT AVOIDS NOSTALGIC RECONSTRUCTIONS OF THE PAST AND IT DEMYSTIFIES THE 'SACRED' IMAGE OF HISTORICAL BUILDING.



The vertical circulation up the building was aided by the installation of escalators, which feature wood-paneled side and bright red steps. The lacquered red escalator cohabits with exposed beams, venetian terrazzo floors and even engravings that left in the columns the traders who were animating this place. Whenever possible, the Fondaco dei Tedeschi ("Fontego" for Venetians) has retained its characteristics and the memory of the past: For nearly 800 years the crossroads of culture and commerce, basically the center from which most of the wealth and fame was in Venice, meals and shelter for the poor during the plague of 1490, destroyed by a fire in 1505, rebuilt and reopened in 1508, maintaining the commercial role with an even more spectacular design and architecture in recent years is used in the Post Office (the word telecommunications remains on the street, another sign of respect for the past).



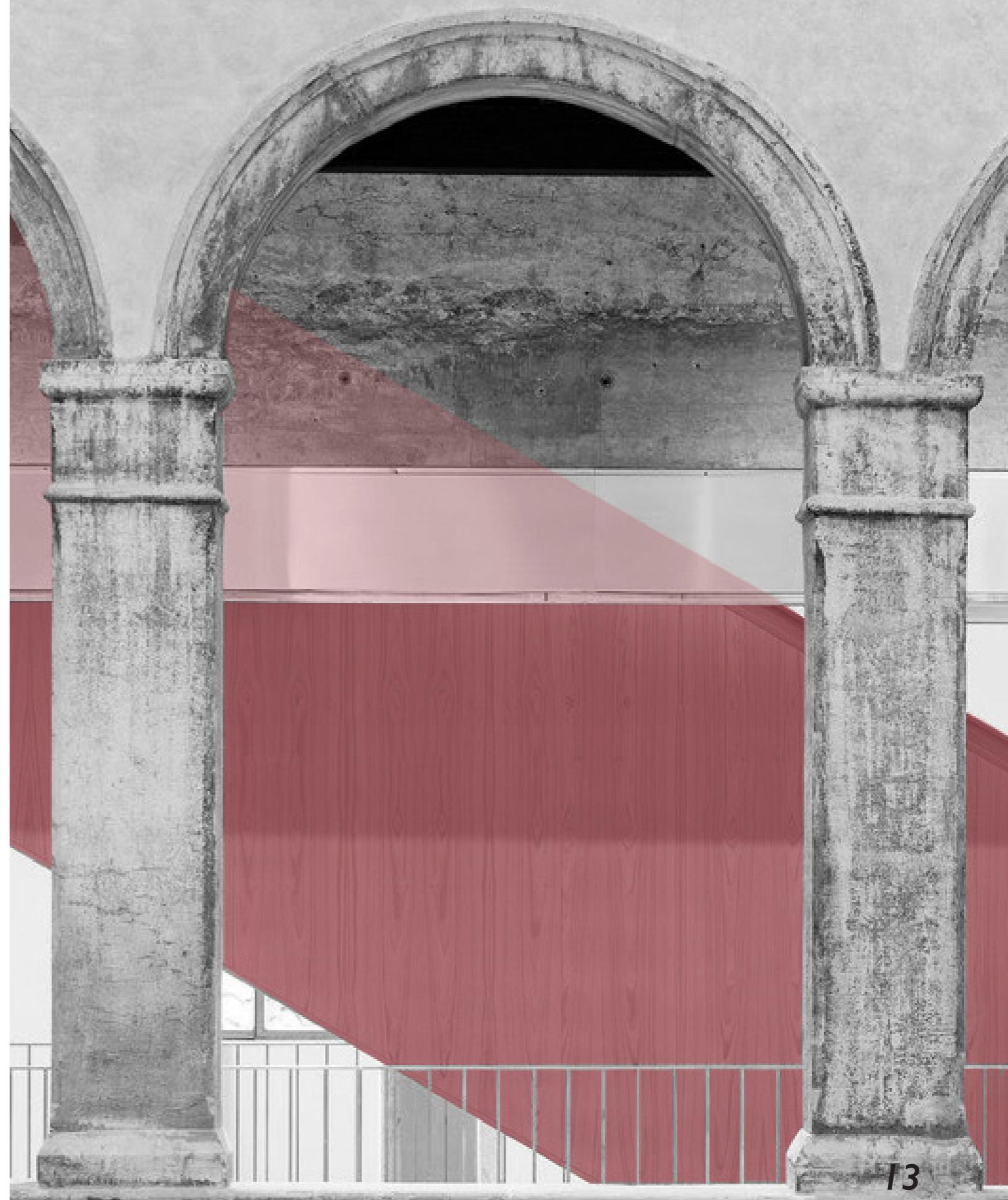
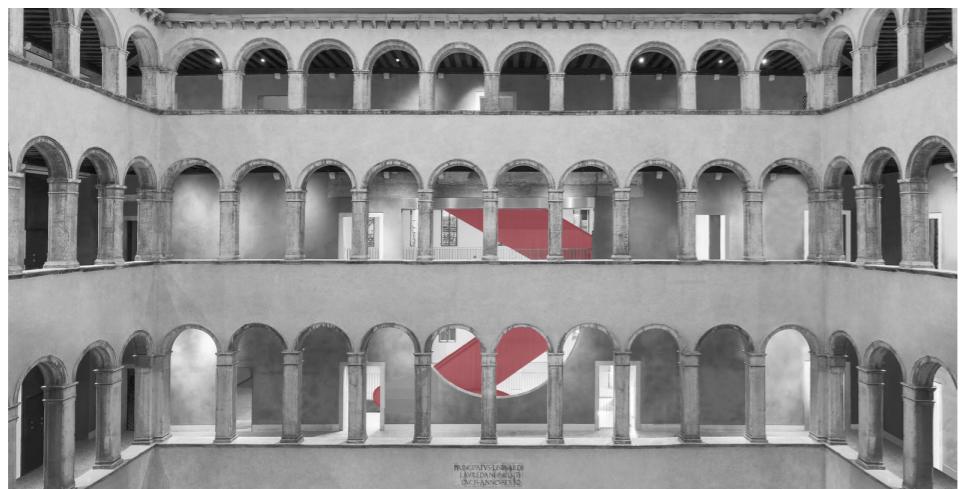
It is difficult to remember all the materials used: copper, brass, steel and aluminum, as well as various types and colours of marble, various wood veneers and solid wood elements, in addition to textiles, plaster paintings, glass and countless candleholders of types. The same variety is found in the forms: the interior elements are circular, angular, curved, staggered or freely deconstructed.

***Each intervention reveals the **true**
substance of the building for its visitors
as an accumulation of **authenticities**.***



The best example of this coexistence between the new and the old can be seen in the two facades of the building. On the one hand, the exterior responds to the context in which it is following the conventional parameters of the time. In this sense it does not call attention since it is the same style as its adjoining buildings, presenting similar characteristics, as is the theme of the windows. In Venice, each building has windows of a different style and even in the same building you can see this aspect. Il Fondaco dei Tedeschi is a clear example of this last since each floor has different windows, both in shape and in size. This element (window) is just the one that separates both facades. It is passed from one that fits completely with Venice to a completely modern one, reformed by Koolhaas. Between these two is the corridor, which is a witness of both facades making a mediator between these two styles, creating a sensational effect.

As has been said before, the courtyard is the central element and around it, turns the interior facade. This is made up of multiple types of arches whose size varies according to the floor creating a harmonious and interesting space that responds to a much more modern style.



Historically, people came here to trade, buy, and sell.

If the ground floor of the Fondaco is indeed its center of gravity, but it's the very top of the building that brings everything into perspective. OMA converted the last level of the original building, which was previously used as a greenhouse, into an event space and terrace. It is open to the public and it hosts a variety of cultural programming and rotating art exhibitions, the first of which is a video installation of mosaics moving through liquid by the local artist Fabrizio Plessi. Just outside, the terrace is the Fondaco's hidden gem, built on one end of the roof and offering unparalleled 360-degree views of Venice, dotted with panels illustrating key monuments around the city.

This is the most public space and serves to use and enjoy the city, accessible at all times, with its new steel floor and glass that hovers over the central courtyard and which has been added a large wooden terrace with spectacular views.

The new roof has been obtained by restructuring the existing pavilion of the nineteenth century. The roof, along with the courtyard below, will become a public space, open to the city and accessible at all times.

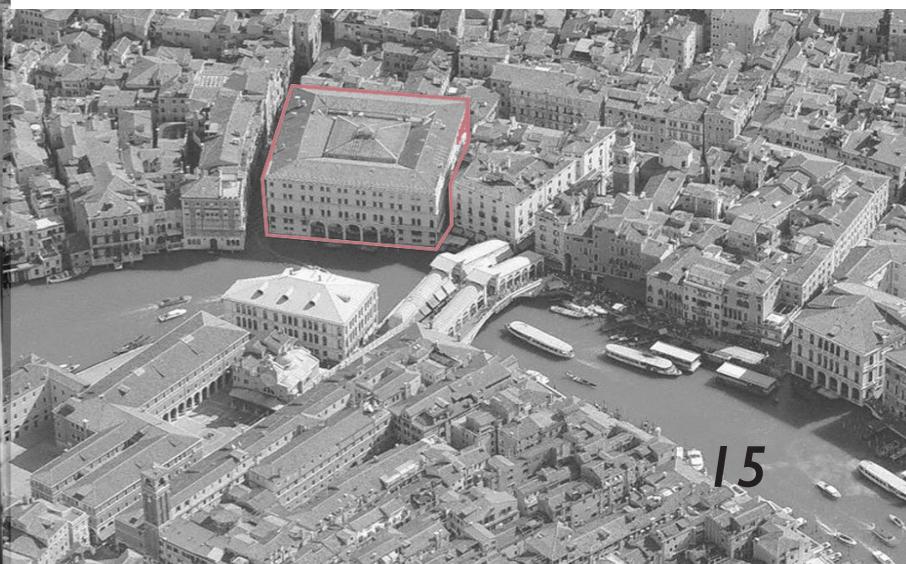
A visit to the Fondaco dei Tedeschi would not be complete without the impressive experience of the panoramic terrace offering an extraordinary perspective of the city of Venice. This panoramic point gives il Fondaco the

finishing touch to its incredible transformation to become the new cultural and commercial epicenter of Venice.

“Though I still wasn't quite sure which way was up in this labyrinthine town built on a lagoon, I stood at the top of the Fondaco and could no longer see the fanny packs, the made in China Venetian flags, or bogus Burano lace scarves. The Fondaco celebrates authentic Venetian culture and its richness, vastness, and dedication to luxury and commerce.”



“Today, people travel here to take a piece of Venice home with them, and now, thanks to this retail renaissance, they can sail away with something they know is truly special—without a shadow of a doubt or a waste of a Euro—even if it's just a gondolier hat”



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