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the architecture & interior design international magazine | middle east

CONNECTIONS JOINING LANDS AND PEOPLE

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**Focus: bridging & linking
continents and cities**
HYPE Abu Dhabi-Dubai
Bosphorus, Doha
Napoli Afragola

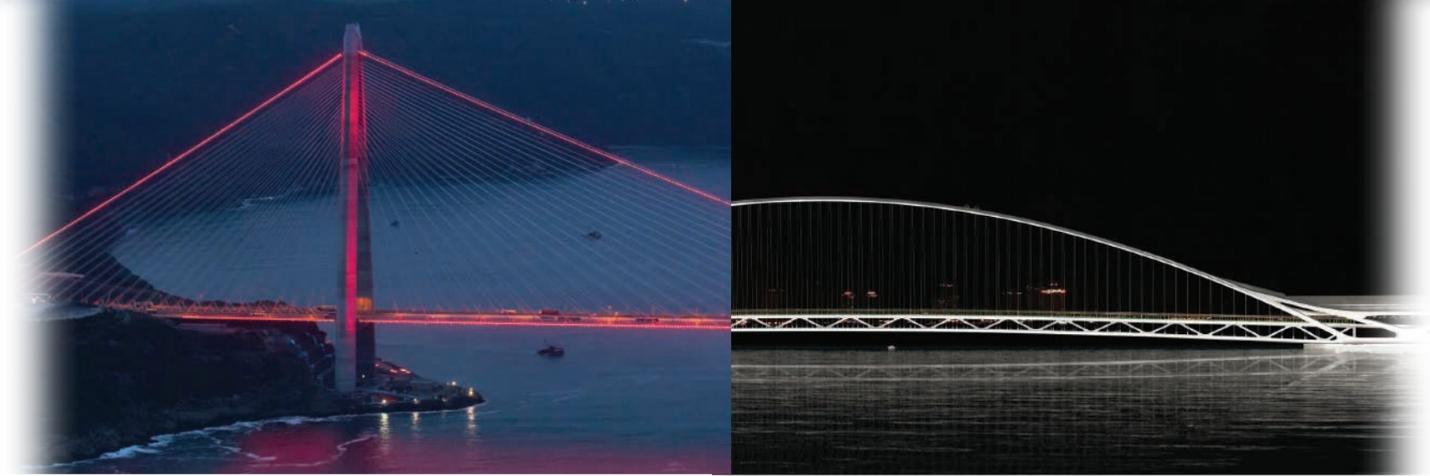
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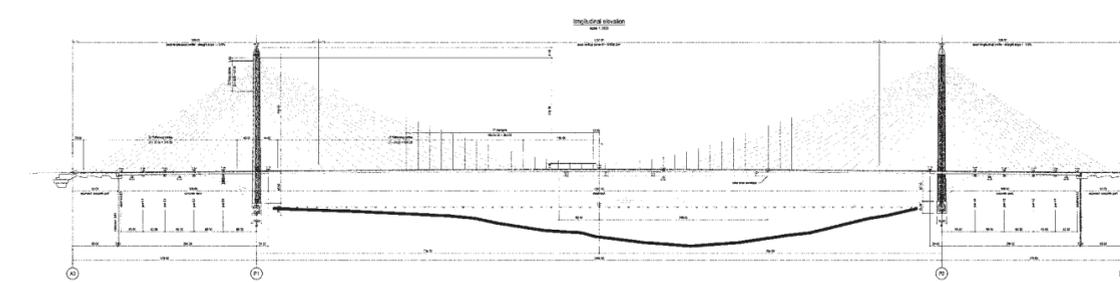
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The Snake

A high speed rail station in Napoli Afragola



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Zaha Hadid Architects

Work
Napoli Afragola high speed train station
Client
Rete Ferroviaria Italiana S.P.A.
Location
Afragola, Naples, Italy
Project Year
Competition win: 2003
Start of construction: May 2015
Completion (Phase 1): June 6, 2017
Architecture and Design
Zaha Hadid
Patrik Schumacher
Architect
Zaha Hadid Architects
Project Team
Project Director: Filippo Innocenti
Project Associate: Roberto Vangeli
Project Architect - competition stage: Filippo Innocenti, Paola Cattarin

For a long time, large cities railway stations have been the product of a non-simple juxtaposition of two conflicting, opposite aspects (yet not always resolved). Being implanted close to the centre, often within the very heart of the metropolis, therefore where generally multi-century stratifications are dense, they tended to represent, through history and the use of revivals, what was considered to be the architectural character of the city and represent its history. Moreover, with the abolition of the city walls, railway stations interpreted the role of a symbolic "introduction" to the city, the "ouverture" and the "business card"; the modern "gate of the city" which, for this reason, was highly emphasised in its formal, semantic, expressive and even monumental values.

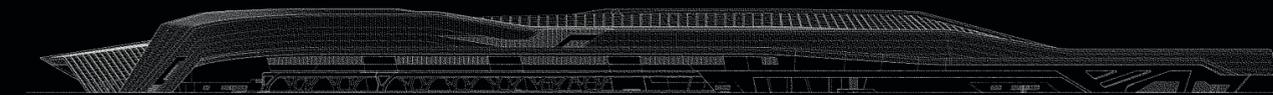
If the station conveyed to the city an official image that deliberately evoked "continuity" and "tradition", in its interior, in the measureless spaces made possible by new futuristic constructive techniques, including iron and large transparent glass covers, the tracks and the train engines, in addition to the sounds, the smells and the smoke, and the frenzy of the crowd, all of this expressed – as in no other building of the time – the exciting and violent impact of the irruption of modernity into cities and their inhabitants' lives. The numerous paintings Monet dedicated to the stations of his beloved Paris are, in this sense, emblematic. The station thus had an "outer shell" that told a story and an interior that evoked the future, and two distinctly different architectural languages lived together in the same building: Eclectic Historicism and Architecture of Engineering – both of them

Site Supervision Team: Marco Guardincerri, Michele Salvi, Pasquale Miele (BC, Building Consulting)
Design Team: Michele Salvi, Federico Bistolfi, Cesare Griffa, Paolo Zilli, Mario Mattia, Tobias Hegemann, Chiara Baccharini, Alessandra Bellia, Serena Pietrantonj, Roberto Cavallaro, Karim Muallem, Luciano Letteriello, Domenico Di Francesco, Marco Guardincerri, Davide Del Giudice
Competition Team: Fernando Perez Vera, Ergjan Alberg, Hon Kong Chee, Cesare Griffa, Karim Muallem, Steven Hatzellis, Thomas Vietzke, Jens Borstelmann, Robert Neumayr, Elena Perez, Adriano De Giannis, Simon Kim, Selim Mimita
Engineering
Structural engineering and geotechnics: AKT (Hanif Kara, Paul Scott), Interprogetti (Giampiero Martuscelli)

Environmental engineering: Max Fordham (Henry Luker, Neil Smith), Studio Reale (Francesco Reale, Vittorio Criscuolo Gaito)
Transport engineering: JMP (Max Matteis)
Landscape
Gross Max (Elco Hooftman)
Size and total area
Total floor area: 30.000 m²
Site area: 190.000 m²
Retail/hospitality area: 10.000 m²
Additional Functions
Building regulation, Co-ordination Local Team: Interplan 2 SRL (Alessandro Gubitosi)
Costing: Building Consulting (Pasquale Miele)
Fire safety: Macchiaroli & Partners (Roberto Macchiaroli)
Acoustic design: Paul Guilleron Acoustics (Paul Guilleron)
Construction design: Sair-Geie (F Sylos Labini) Rocca Bacci Associati

Contractor: Ati Astaldi S.p.a. (Astaldi S.p.a., NBI S.p.a.)
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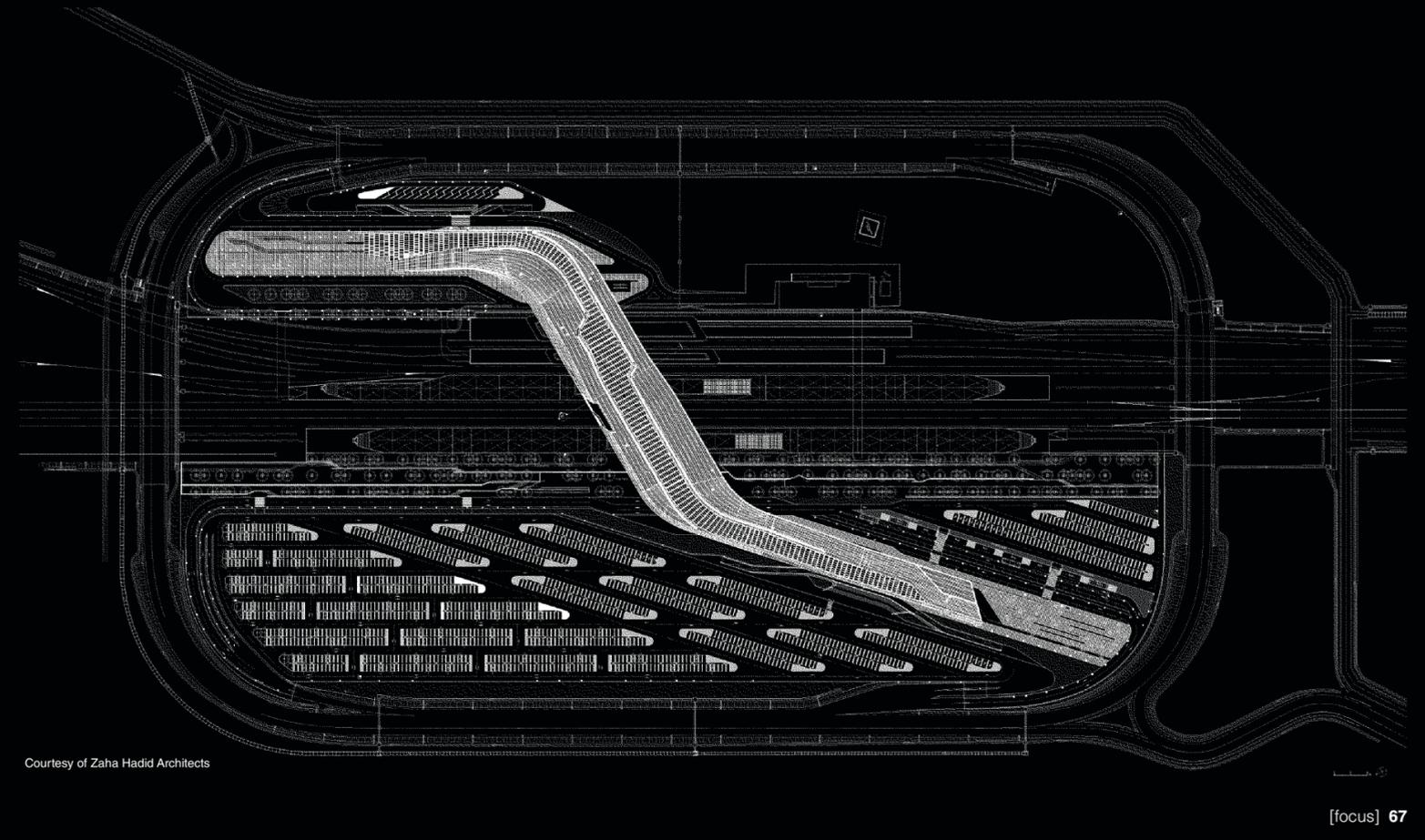
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expressed almost always with works by famous architects and important engineers – conveying complexity and contradictions to that transition era architecture.

Whatever its architectural language was, the station represented in any case the first and last piece of the city that strangers would have seen: this would have been a reassuring and welcoming place for a visitor at the end of a long journey, often long and tiring, or, on the contrary, the last fixed, stable and secure place before entering into the transient and changing dimension of a travel that would often project elsewhere, to *another place*, probably unsettling and disorienting.

None of this belongs anymore to the stations of our time, because the nature and concept of the journey itself has changed, along with the relationship between the city and the suburban world, with our way of thinking and living time (and the organisation of our days) and space, and our way of moving through one or the other. The station is no longer a landing place or a solid starting point, but it is more and more a “hub”, part of an intricate network of points and trails that overlap both ancient ways of communication and natural landscape, radically altering its original characteristics: an integrated system in which the distance between the strongly characterised and clearly circumscribed urban space and an increasingly natural anthropic environment – *artificium versus natura* – has now almost been zeroed, also because of the ever-reduced crossing time for long distances.

The new station for high speed rail at Napoli Afragola designed by Zaha Hadid is one of the most convincing examples of how today an important railway station should be conceived and designed, and above all, what it needs to express. This is one of the most important achievements for the national infrastructure system, because it represents one of southern Italy's key interchange stations, serving four high speed inter-city lines, three inter-regional lines, a local commuter line and, in the future (2022) – in addition to the planned high speed rail services connecting Bari and Reggio Calabria with the north of Italy and Europe – the new rail infrastructure will create an important hub. Napoli Afragola will serve the entire Campania region and connect its centre with its hinterland, >



towards Caserta and Nola, two important towns at the centre of a wide and densely populated territory: a very important opportunity for the economic development of that campanian district. Located 12 km north of Naples, Afragola station, in fact, is also planned to serve its local communities of Acerra, Afragola, Caivano, Casalnuovo di Napoli, and Casoria that vary in population from 10,000 to 50,000 residents. Afragola will be an intermodal hub, relieving congestion in the city centre and will not replace the existing Napoli Centrale terminus. Once all lines are operational, 32,700 passengers are expected to use the station every day (approximately 12 million passengers each year) with 4,800 commuters using the station each morning and evening rush-hour. For Napoli Afragola high speed train station, Zaha Hadid won in 2003 an international competition banned two years earlier, when a prestigious Commission chaired by Oriol Bohigas (and composed, among others, by Francesco Venezia, Hans Hollein and Benedetto Gravagnuolo) rewarded the Anglo-Iraqi architect's proposal preferring it to those presented by other protagonists of the world architectural scene such as Peter Eisenman, Rem Koolhaas or Dominique Perrault. Zaha Hadid, Pritzker Prize and RIBA's Royal Gold Medal awarded, thus further consolidated her close and happy relationship with Italy, the country where she realised many undoubtedly fascinating works, from the Maxxi Museum in Rome to the City Life Skyscraper in Milan, from the recently realised Maritime Terminal of Salerno, to the Messner Mountain Museum in Plan de Corones, up to her activities in product and fashion design for many Italian companies.

The station is the product of one of the most important investments for public works made in the last twenty years in Italy and its complex and troubled story – after laying the foundation stone in 2010, there was a long break finally followed by a restart in May 2015 – came to an end with the inauguration on the 6th of June this year. It is one of the last great works created by the London-based studio before the untimely death of Zaha Hadid. In an area of almost 200,000 square feet, a longitudinal sinusoidal body stretches for almost half a kilometer, with a bridge structure perpendicular to the rafting beam, which bends at its ends, >



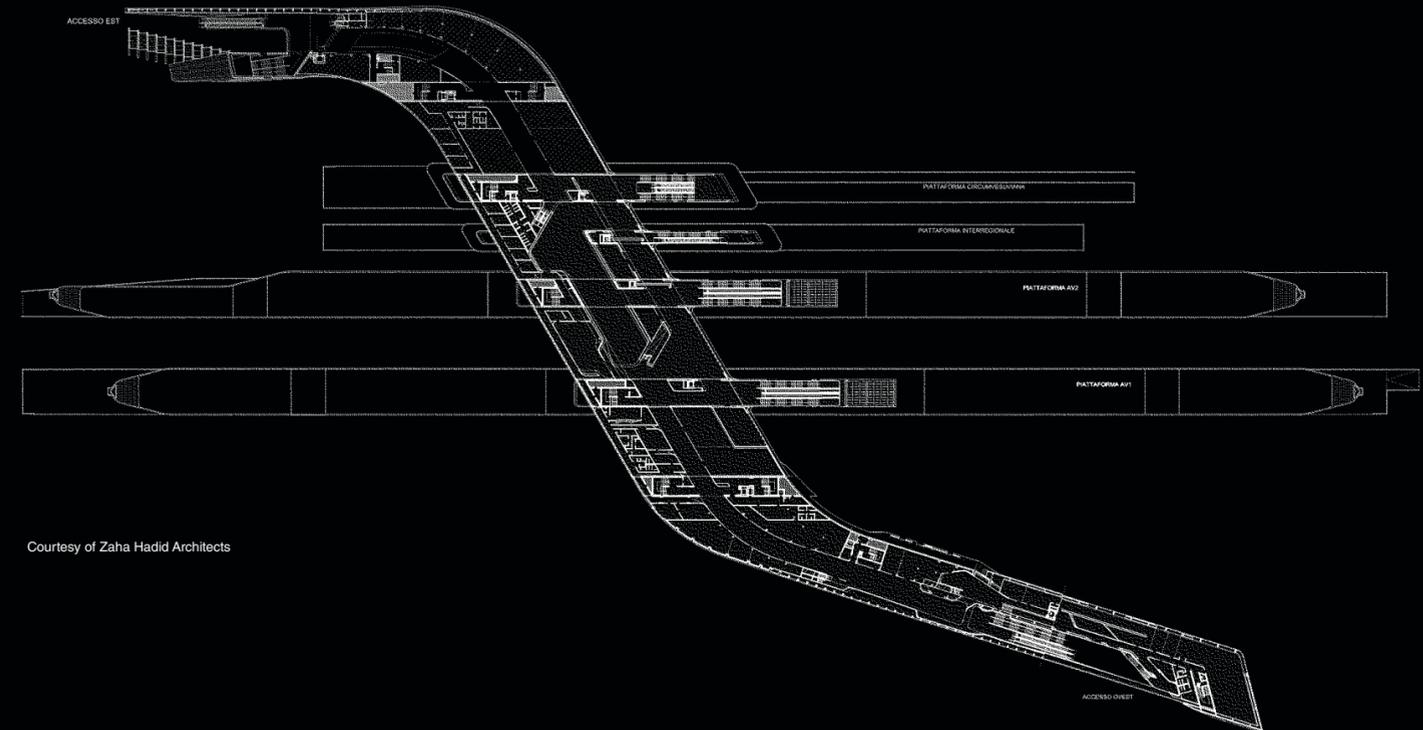
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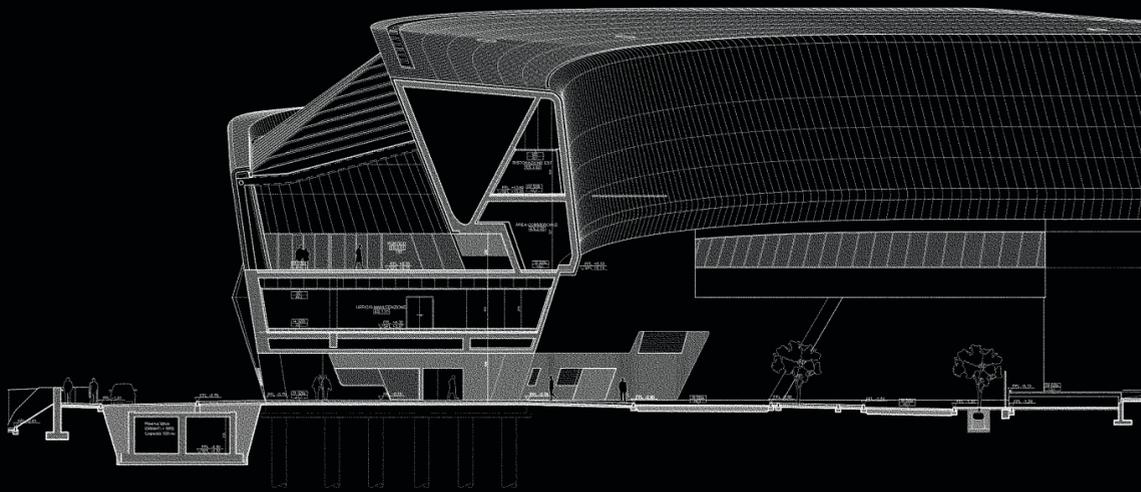
parallel to them, generating thus an elongated "S" shape, which helps to implement the dynamic tension that the work seems to be willing to express. The main building is organised on four levels and lodges a gallery top with shops, cafes, restaurants and other services that, just like the nineteenth century passages, is illuminated from above by a transparent cover supported by a structure consisting of more than two hundred different steel ribs, while the walls are clad in panels of solid-surface material, Corian. The environmental sustainability of the building is guaranteed by solar panels integrated within the roof, combining light and natural ventilation with low energy consumption.

In the belly of this giant artificial serpent runs the restless flow of hundreds of people and Zaha Hadid managed to give an architectural form to this movement, crystallising it in concrete, steel and crystal. This resulted in a work of great plastic force, a gentle and sculptural object at once: a seductive snake, crawling on the formless and abandoned hinterland territory, trying to present itself as the foundation of a possible new identity for a landscape lacking of qualities, an identity yet to be built but able to face the future, for once, with willpower and optimism.

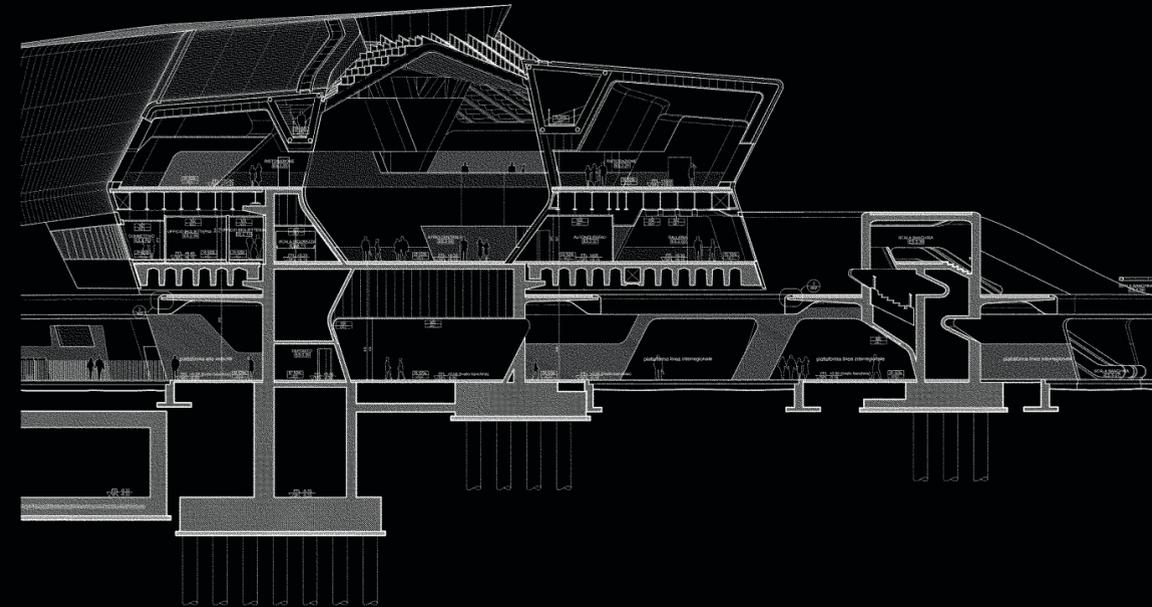
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