



# IDENTICITY: Shaping Urban Transformation — Concept Statement and Thematic Overview

## *Rizoma Architettura*

### IDENTICITY — Preserving, Layering, Giving Back

For Rizoma Architettura, IDENTICITY is not simply a design theme: it is a stance. It reflects a deep belief that places hold a soul, shaped by traces, transformations, and lived experiences — and that intervening within them first and foremost requires listening and respect. To do so means working in harmony with their nature and understanding the significance of their historical, social, and human evolution, of which architectural language and stylistic expression are only the outer form and envelope.

Within this perspective, IDENTICITY aligns coherently with the context of the 10th edition of the *Italian Design Day*, whose theme is “*Re-Design. Regenerating spaces, objects, ideas, relations.*” As Mario Cucinella, Italy’s Design Ambassador for Design Day 2026, states: “*Design is a process of transformation. A way to rethink spaces, objects, ideas, and the relationships between them. Today, regeneration requires an integrated vision in which architecture, design, and urban thinking work together to address the environmental and social challenges shaping our cities.*”

“**Reclaiming spaces,**” therefore, **is not an act of conquest, but a gesture of restitution.** Preserving the identity of a place means recognizing that its history — that specific history — is also our own. It is a human value, before being a social or architectural one.

The three projects presented by Rizoma Architettura — **Jo&Joe Roma**, **CX Bicocca**, and **TSH Bologna** — represent three distinct yet deeply coherent ways of embodying this principle. Through Rizoma’s reinterpretation, these buildings have been transformed into hybrid environments where hospitality, student living, F&B, workspaces, and shared functional and leisure areas — from laundries to auditoriums and swimming pools — coexist organically and flexibly. A consciously structured approach to preserving and regenerating both spaces and identities.





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## Jo&Joe Roma — The Epidermal Project

Jo&Joe Roma is a place where time has never stood still, but has continuously settled and accumulated.

From the foundations of a **Roman *domus***, later transformed into an 18th-century **convent** and then into a post-war **hotel**, a powerful — almost geological — stratification emerges.

Rizoma's intervention neither erases nor conceals. Instead, it adds a new layer, revealing the stratification and the “living flesh” of this historical succession.

**The present intervention constitutes a new, explicit, and contemporary layer — intentionally disruptive.** It introduces a **vibrant, pop-inflected language** that engages in dialogue with a **neo-Baroque aesthetic**. An epidermal gesture, precisely — visible and bold, yet “superficial” in the most elevated sense of the term: perceptually reversible, respectful in its intent.

Here, **identity** is not frozen. It **exists as a dynamic balance between continuity and interruption**, between memory and discontinuity. It is the harmony of something that evolves without forgetting.

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## CX Bicocca — Flexibility and Reversibility

**CX Bicocca was born as a factory:** a serial space, a typically Fordist architecture devoted to the production cycle of the assembly line — a dehumanizing environment designed for the perfect interplay between humans and machines.

Its original identity was defined by the flexibility and continuity of its spaces, conceived to accommodate repetitive, collective labor. Here, female workers in rows would hand-roll tobacco cigarettes for a profitable consumer market of habitual smokers.





This productive, repetitive spirit was followed by emptiness, abandonment, and finally **urban decay**, with **graffiti** marking the raw walls. Even in their brutality, these are identity traces — scars and tattoos of life.

Rizoma intervenes without denying any of this: neither the industrial soul nor the graffiti. The space is given a new purpose — student housing and hotel — yet through a radical principle: **reversibility**. Rooms are constructed dry, as a temporary and contemporary layer. A layer that can be removed, “peeled back,” returning the space to its original nature.

Here, **IDENTICITY manifests as respect for possibility — not only for what has been, but also for what could still be.**

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## TSH Bologna — Layered Lives

TSH Bologna is a building born in the **1970s** as a symbol of Fordist efficiency: massive, closed, rational. A reinforced concrete bunker that originally housed the former SIP, later Telecom.

Over time, obsolescence of the services offered, driven by new technologies, led to **abandonment** — years of precarious identity.

Between 2012 and 2020, life returned in a fragile and disruptive form: that of over 200 **refugee families who occupied the building**, transforming it into a space of survival and necessity. An apolitical, stateless, and illegal soul, yet one with a powerful voice demanding to be heard.

When Rizoma entered, all of this was present. Not just architecture, but **layered lives**. The project does **not choose a single identity — it embraces them all**, once again transforming the building into a hybrid space.

**Inside**, the original flexibility is preserved and new **hybrid spaces** are introduced. A lively, almost **punk** tension is maintained, in harmony with the spirit of the Bolognina neighborhood where TSH Bologna is located.





**Outside**, intervention is decisive: the building is transformed, made sustainable, and regenerated. **From a symbol of hardship to an ecological model.**

**Today, TSH Bologna is also an active place** — an incubator of energy and ideas, hosting and promoting local entrepreneurial hubs and innovative start-ups.

**An organism that not only preserves identity but generates new ones.**

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## **IDENTICITY — The Value of the Imperfect**

In all three projects, **Rizoma Architettura works through addition**, not subtraction.

It does not erase: it layers.

It does not homogenize: it embraces differences.

This is IDENTICITY: the **recognition that the identity of a place is never pure, but always composite**. It is made of conflicts, overlaps, fractures, and scars. And precisely for this reason, it holds immeasurable value.

**Preserving it does not mean shielding it from change, but allowing it to continue evolving** — with respect, awareness, and responsibility.

