

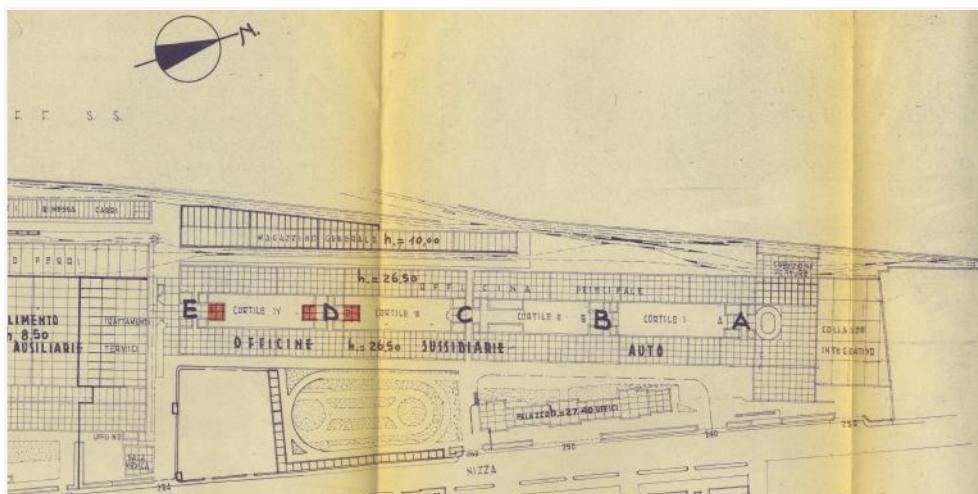
THE ARCHIVE SPEAKS VOLUMES

# THE LINGOTTO OF TURIN

# The history, the vision, the symbol, the success

It's beautiful, the word ingot, in Piedmontese “lingot”. The sound is fast, snappy and evokes wealth and fortune, like a bar of gold. It is a perfect name for the fledgling factory on the southeastern outskirts of Turin, though it has nothing to do with the precious metal, but with the local name of the place: an old rural estate with a farmstead, called Basse del Lingotto, named after the noble owners, the lords of Moncalieri, who once inhabited it.

French-born Piedmontese engineer Giacomo Mattè Trucco, age 47, known in the industry as one of the forerunners in the use of reinforced concrete, is called upon to view the area.

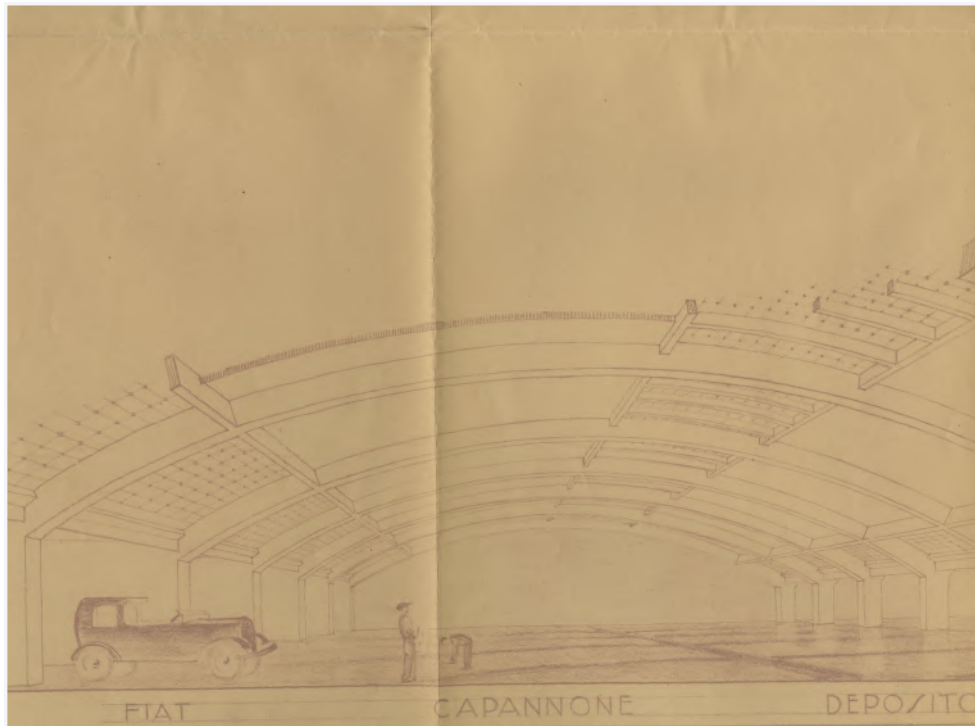


The idea communicated to him by entrepreneur Giovanni Agnelli, one of the founders of the Fiat automobile manufacturing company that had opened 15 years earlier, seems brilliant: to build a large new industrial plant, encompassing all of the primary and secondary automotive production in one single area on about 378,000 square meters of that newly acquired land.

Giacomo is familiar with Fiat, for whom he has already worked, and his new collaboration with the Italian Automobile Factory of Turin makes him feel like he is at the center of the universe. Agnelli, after



several trips to America in which he learned about Henry Ford's system and principles of production in the automobile industry, made him part of his dream of turning Turin into the new Italian Detroit, choosing him as the Lingotto's lead architect.



Therefore, he will be the one to make the vision of a modern American-inspired factory tangible, with a linear and sequential use of processing, replicating the Taylorist system in the process of mass production, with a new pattern for the relationship between workers and the shop floor.

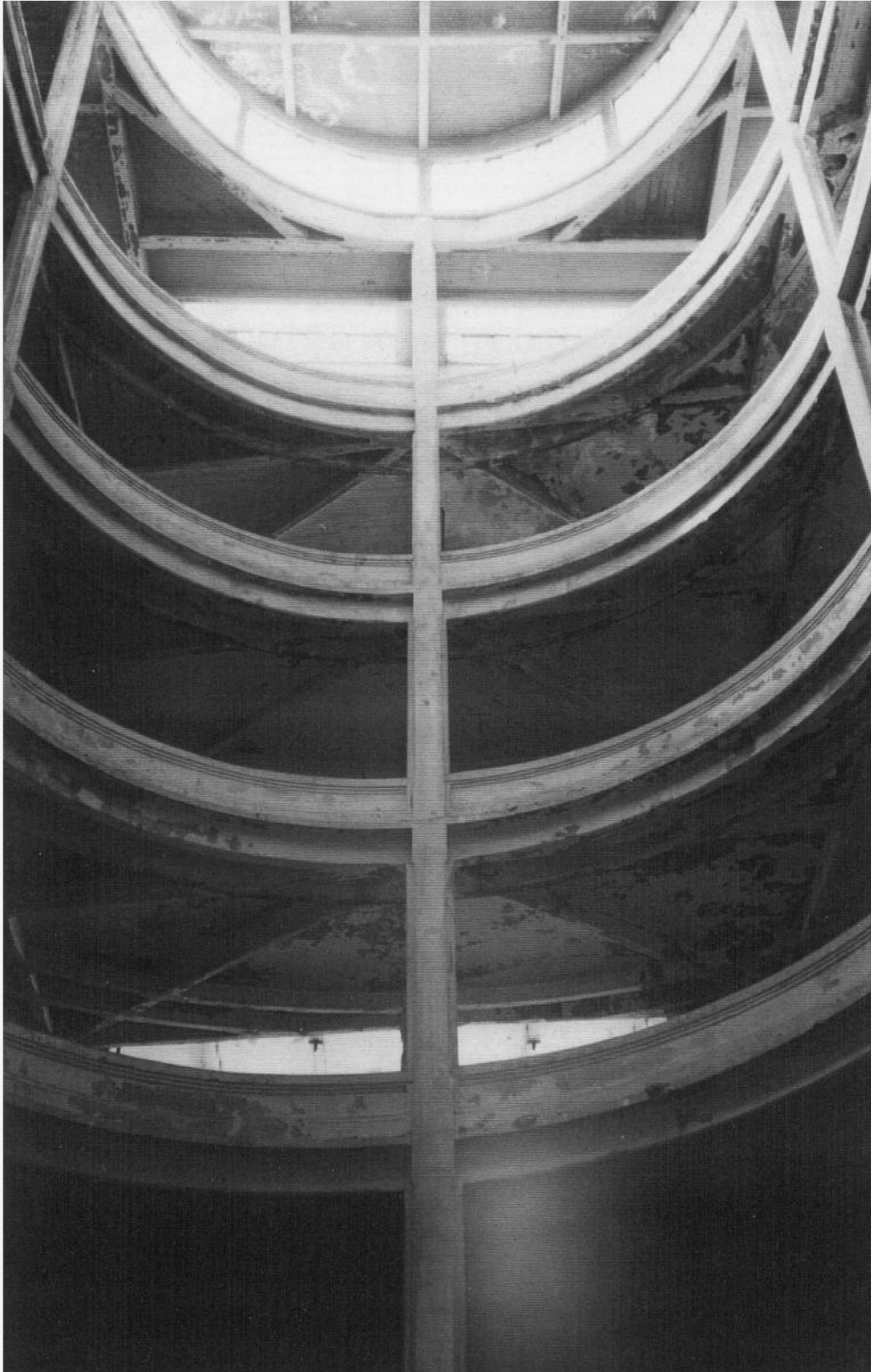
Though the winds of war plague the air and a world conflict has just begun, it is not possible to stop dreaming and thinking big.

The year 1915 runs by. Mattè Trucco sets his hand to the design of the factory, which, due to the constraints posed by the nearby railway line, will inevitably need to be developed vertically.

A year later, at the height of the Great War, construction of the Lingotto begins: a reinforced concrete giant, the first of its kind in Italy, that becomes the symbol of the modernity of the Turin-based company.



Measuring 507 meters in length, the factory consists of four multi-story modular blocks, housing the production workshops, forging sheds, casting molds, heat treatments and other various processes (mechanical steelwork, saw house), warehouses, body shops, and foundry.



The metal press facility is all on one level while the office building is comprised of five above-ground floors with two spiral ramps at the far north and south ends of the complex, whose function is to facilitate the transport of items from one level to another.



Production of the cars begins on the ground floor and continues in stages on the upper levels; assembly is carried out on the top floor, while testing takes place on the roof built in the shape of a circuit: a unique engineering creation with asphalt paving, consisting of two straight stretches of 443 meters each and two elevated curves. In 1975, architectural historian Marco Pozzetto described it as “a kind of terrace stretching out toward the Alps, considered a true monument of civilization in motion”.

King Victor Emmanuel III, who inaugurates the Lingotto on May 15, 1923, is captivated by the grandeur of the factory and the gracefulness of the decorative and finishing elements, atypical of industrial buildings. This is clearly the hand of Mattè Trucco, playing around as an artist with “his” reinforced concrete, transforming, for example, the staircases into artistic components, and not just a means of access to the floors.



The following year, Le Corbusier writes of the Lingotto as “one of the most impressive spectacles industry has ever produced” (*Vers une architecture*, G. Crès et Cie, Paris 1924), paying homage to the language of Mattè Trucco, the creator of this industrial complex of great historical-artistic and documentary value, one of the best examples there is of functionalist architecture.

Production at the Lingotto ends in 1982, after nearly 60 years of honorable service, but its function as the city's beacon and guiding light, like intangible DNA, continues to renew itself: the factory, once a symbol of industrial avant-garde, is now an attractive and futuristic Exhibition Center, the commercial and cultural beating heart of Turin, of Piedmont, of Italy itself.

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