

Live happ-illy

International coffee brand illy brings its Milan pop-up store to life with light

By Verna Bar

In 140 countries, the illy brand is synonymous with dark, rich espresso, typically served very hot in small cups for drinking any time of day or evening. A 79-year-old coffee specialty producer based in Trieste, Italy, illy operates 200 espressamente coffee bar locations worldwide, serving the company's signature brew.

To test a new concept for their illycafé retail business, the company opened a pop-up shop in Milan's Galleria San Carlo. The dimensional environment was created by interdisciplinary architect Caterina Tazzoldi, who divides her time between a design practicing in Torino, Italy, and teaching in the architecture program at New York's Columbia University.

From the all-glass storefront, shoppers can view the red-accented white interior that presents 200 cubes seemingly engaged in a lost game of space interplay, covering the walls and ceiling. "The basis for the geometry of the modules was flexibility," Tazzoldi says. The same unit also is used for the display of illy products: coffee, coffee makers, cups, mugs, frothers, grinders, glasses, pitchers, and selected teas and chocolate.

By varying the depth of the cube's shell, thickness and opacity, Tazzoldi's design was translated into stacked and individually hung units that also function to contain the shop's lighting, as well as a tasting bar, display table, counter, frame for viewing an illy video, storage, housing for communications equipment and recycling bins.

Three types of lamps, all rated at 4,000°K, provide ambient and accent illumination. For the ceiling, Tazzoldi collaborated with Bologna, Italy-based lighting fixture manufacturer Lucifero to modify an existing fluorescent style into a three-light design for the desired configuration within the overhead cubes. "They are fitted with a dimmer, so the output intensity can be regulated," she explains. "We have also incorporated an inverter, so that in case of a blackout, the units can still be operable and serve as emergency illumination."



Within the cubes used for product display, Tazzoldi specified LEDs, citing their heatless output that would not be harmful to the merchandise.

Tazzoldi and her staff used Grasshopper software to manipulate the placement patterns of the cubes. "There are over 3,000 configuration options possible with this system," she says. "Because it is modular, it can be adapted to many

locations. Additionally, its particularly efficient for reconfiguring a store like the illy shop, where the products have similar measurements and have related end uses."

Overall, the cubed lighting effect adds depth and a bit of brightness to highlight what illy is best known for—a rich, dark cup of deliciousness. DDJ

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