

World Expo 2010 Shanghai.
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Italy's Pavilion: an example of creativity and technical excellence.

The Commission of Italy coordinates and manages the events and activities related to the Italian participation at World Expo 2010 Shanghai. www.expo2010italy.gov.it



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Playing the Shanghai Game

World Expo 2010 Shanghai presents the world with an extraordinary opportunity, without priors, to shape the perception of scores of Chinese visitors. To take full advantage of this opportunity Italy has chosen to build its own pavilion on a 6,000sqm area, the largest space available to exhibitors at the event.

The pavilion design by architect Giampaolo Imbrighi measures 3,600sqm across and 18 metres high. It is an example of Italian contemporary cultural values and paid homage to the host country. Seen from above, the pavilion resembles the start of the Chinese game pick-up-sticks, also known in Italy as the Shanghai Game, where a number of sticks are thrown in a random pile. "The different sections of the building make up a geometrical variety symbolising a complexity of regional cultures that define the Italian identity," says Beniamino Quintieri, Commissioner General of Italy for Shanghai World Expo 2010.

The shape of the Italian Pavilion in Shanghai also shows the topographic complexity of Italian cities, notes Quintieri, with their narrow streets and alleyways that end in large squares also known as "piazza". These features also belong to traditional Chinese settings. Chinese courtyards and Italian "piazza" not only provide a place where people can meet and socialise, but where people can also spend leisure time.

"The quality of life in Italian cities is very high, and the growth of industrial centres in different regions has positively contributed to this" says Quintieri. Italy has benefitted from the natural evolution of its industrial hubs, which took years to develop following the tradition of skilled craftsmanship. Instead of creating few very large cities, Italy

has many small and medium-sized cities that prove more manageable and more pleasant for residents.

Italian Expertise

In addition to representing the various Italian regions, the pavilion's segmented sections also provide the benefit of being easily dismantled and eventually relocated in a permanent location after the Shanghai World Expo. "We're using top quality materials and we hope that, at the end of the Expo, the building can be kept" says Commissioner Quintieri.

Among other innovating materials employed in the building, there will also be transparent cement, a new material which creates a translucent illusion, photovoltaic curtain walls, as well as self-cleaning glass. "The pavilion is a bioclimatic 'machine'," says Quintieri.

"We signed a strategic partnership agreement with Permasteelisa Group, a world leader in design, production and installation of architectural envelopes, and with GranitiFiandre, a leading company in the production of high end porcelain coating tiles," says Quintieri. "With Fiera Milano - the main Italian trade fair organisation - we coordinate the participation of Italian Regions to the Expo and with Triennale di Milano - the Italian institute that promotes architecture and design - we are preparing the concept of the exhibition inside the Italian Pavilion."

Some of the Italy's best-known companies are sponsoring the pavilion by supplying equipment, materials and expertise. These include iGuzzini (lighting-technique project), Labiotest (improving air quality), Mapei (insulating materials, plastering, paints),



Elco (solar panels), Otim (shipping), Zuccheti (taps), Prysmian (cables and systems for energy and telecommunication sectors), Climaveneta (air-conditioning systems), Sispa (fire-fighting strategy and equipments), Vimar (electric switches), Italcementi (transparent cement), Tecno (elevators and escalators), Gruppo Athuria (thermomechanical fluids pressurization systems), UCS (window remote control systems), Globo (bath furnitures), Uniflair (steel structures for floating floors), Portolp (doors), Cisa (handle and locks), DB Group (glass shipping), Hilti (plant engineering, steel and metal manufactures), Metra (aluminium and metal profiles for architecture), Sika (technical materials), Patrona Frau, Matteo Grassi, Faram and Mascagni will provide furniture.

Plans are underway to finalise not only the exhibition details, which are due to be approved by June, but also the programme of events and activities of various type which constitutes the Italian contribution to developing the theme of its participation. With construction due to start at the beginning of May, Italy prepares to share its excellence with the world in Shanghai.



Italian fashion house Versace has an impressive boutique on West Nanjing Road, Shanghai (above).

Another company that is expanding in China is freight forwarder Savino del Bene. "We increased the number of staff in China last year from 50 to 100," says Marco Loporati, managing director. "We've increased our activities and set up operations in Tianjin, Dalian and Qingdao last year." Business has slowed, especially in the first two months of 2009, so the company is also looking for shipments in other commodities such as food, wine and fashion, besides typical products such as marble and tiles. "We're also looking to develop in other areas such as Suzhou, Wuxi and Beijing."

Adapting to the Times

Being nimble, many of Italy's SMEs are rewriting their business plans to adjust to the changing conditions. Marco Polo, a consulting company, has moved away from assisting Italian companies source materials in China. "That is now a side business, our main focus now is sourcing raw materials in Africa for Italian and Chinese companies," says Nancy Li, owner and deputy general manager. "In the past, we used to get two or three orders a month from Italian companies sourcing in China, then last year it shrunk to one a month." The company is now investigating opportunities for Chinese companies looking to invest in Italy.

Although some enterprises have suffered in the downturn, Francesco Gatti, director of 3GATTI Architectural Studio, has seen business in China improve. "We're actually doing better now than before," says Gatti. He suggests that developers are having a harder time selling or leasing their properties so they are concentrating more on design and

its quality. Gatti, whose firm was established in Shanghai in 2004, has moved away from interior design and landscaping to commercial buildings and urban planning.

Trade show organiser Fiera Milano has adjusted expectations downward, given the slowdown. "We were until 2008 very satisfied with our financial results, but we've revised our projections for 2009," says Dario Rota, general manager. Although business in exhibition shows is down, the situation is even worse in Europe, he adds.

Uptick in Luxury

Luxury yacht maker Ferretti SpA is experiencing an upswing in interest in China. "Because winter is a lean season for us and with the economy in crisis, we did not expect many sales, but in the last month we've received quite a few inquiries," says Daniell Chen, company representative. "Most of them have come from private Chinese companies that are looking for a special venue to host corporate parties. Although China represents a small percentage of our global sales, it continues to grow."

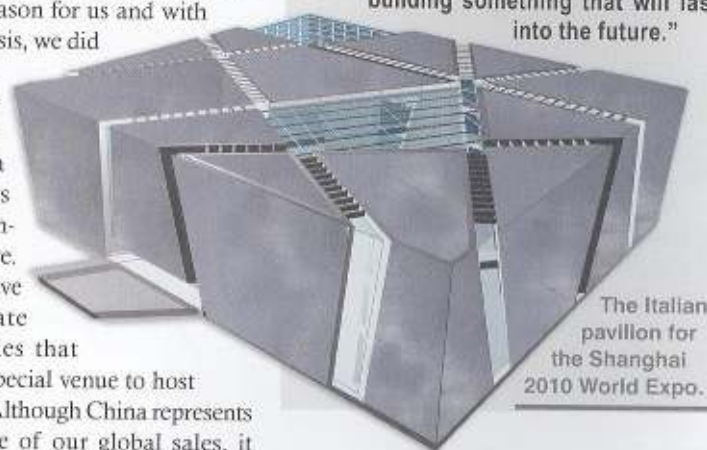
Regardless, the general business sentiment among Italians remains positive. "Italian companies are holding their own, I think this crisis is an opportunity for us," says Consul General Roscigno. "From what I hear, the luxury sector is still okay, there are ups and downs here and

Gearing Up For Expo

With the countdown to the Shanghai World Expo down to its last year, preparations are accelerating for the Italian pavilion. Twenty three Italian companies have signed on as corporate sponsors, supplying a wide variety of building materials and expertise in the construction of the pavilion. They include Permasteelisa a glass supplier, Graniti Fiandre a supplier of floors, iGuzzini a well-known company for lighting fixtures, and Techno for lifts and elevators.

"The construction will cost at least EUR10m, another EUR4m to EUR5m will be spent on the permanent exhibition and around EUR10m for activities and events," said Beniamino Quintieri, commissioner general of Italy World Expo Shanghai 2010. The concept of the presentation is due to be finalised in May or June in Italy with the assistance of exhibition organisers Triennale di Milano.

Despite the uncertainty about the fate of pavilions after the Expo's run, Quintieri hopes that the Italian pavilion will impress organisers enough to invest in preserving it. "Other countries are looking at this project as a pavilion, but we're looking at this as a building," he said. "We're building something that will last into the future."



The Italian pavilion for the Shanghai 2010 World Expo.

there but we're getting a positive message from Italian companies." ■

To make donations to the victims of the earthquake in Abruzzo, Italy, please find information on the following website: http://www.ambpechino.esteri.it/ambasciata_pechino