H ZERO
Piazza degli Ottaviani, 2
50123 Firenze
info@hzero.com

WWW.HZERO.COM

H ZERO l'impresa ferroviaria in miniatura

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The new museum in the heart of Florence

HZERO
The railway company in miniature

On Sunday 29 May 2022 the original museum project devoted to the imaginary world of the train opens its doors to the public: with immersive environments, projections and workshops, in the spaces of the former Ariston cinema an extraordinary narrative device conceived starting from the famous San Giuliano model railway comes to life.

Opening in **Florence** on **Sunday 29 May 2022** is the new and extraordinary **HZERO museum project**; it is an original narrative device that comes to life in the spaces of the **former Ariston cinema** and **explores the imaginary world of the train** starting from the imposing model railway created by Giuseppe Paternò Castello di San Giuliano.

In a long journey that originated in **1972** with the acquisition of a first train made by Märklin, the **model railway** came about from an idea by Giuseppe Paternò Castello di San Giuliano and, over time, has taken on the dimensions of very high-level game and architectural work. The result of over forty years of passionate work by its creator, enriched by the energy and mastery of numerous friends and acquaintances, the San Giuliano model railway is a unique work, in which the hand-crafting dimension is combined with an important technological and aesthetic component. The result is the creation of a **phantasmagoria of realistic and fantasy-filled scenarios**, which sees a succession of landscapes recalling the mountainous profiles of the Dolomites, architectures inspired by Berlin and maritime landscapes inspired by the coasts of the Isle of Elba. Within this settings, a multitude of small narrations takes shape through characters and episodes that live countless scenes of everyday life, independent of each other but not for this reason any less realistic.

Distancing itself from the dimension of a mere manufactured article, the San Giuliano model railway is a **genuine evolving work**, subject to continuous updates and set in a space that is poised between reality and invention.

Fifty years after the commencement of the endeavour, the hand-crafted and architectural work measuring over 280 m^2 – among the largest in Europe – comes to life inside the spaces of the former Ariston cinema near to Santa Maria Novella station. The extraordinary model railway becomes the fulcrum of an unusual and innovative project, coming about due to the dedication of Giuseppe Paternò Castello di San Giuliano and the desire of **Diego, Giulia and Maria di San Giuliano** to give their father's work a museum dimension.

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The name HZERO recalls the expression used in modelling to indicate the 1/87 scale, the unit of measurement that defines the optimum proportion in order to guarantee both a perfect overview and the exploration of the smallest details.

HZERO comes about as the combination between the hand-crafting mastery that made possible the realisation of the model railway and new technologies. Since its origins, the museum project has taken shape as an immersive narrative device conceived to envelop and interact with the San Giuliano model railway, which thus becomes not only visible but also liveable. Through a sophisticated poetic choreography of lights, sounds and projections, the space around the model comes to life, creating a captivating sensory setting coming about from the collaboration between different creative languages.

The inventor of the new museum project is Alberto Salvadori, a project manager active in running numerous cultural institutions and an expert in the languages of the contemporary world, who, together with professionals from the theatrical, graphic and musical spheres, has conceived a system of representation capable of completing and enriching the work of Giuseppe di San Giuliano. In a seamless manner with the working methods that have made the model a genuine work and knowing how to avail itself of the inspiration of numerous skilled workers and professional figures, the layout design conceived for HZERO proposes interventions that emphasise the scenic rendering of the model, at the same time enriching it with its own intrinsic aesthetic quality.

The visiting route begins with the model railway. The spectators delve into the coves of the model to discover its little stories and hidden scenes, reproduced with an abundance of details like being inside a movie set. From the unaware excursionists walking along the mountain paths to the crowds lined up on the station platforms, to the revelation of a murder in miniature, the protagonists of the model gradually reveal the great narration that it proposes.

The setting is enhanced with a system of projections, which eschew the traditional diorama, conceived by the Milanese studio Karmachina in collaboration with curator Alberto Salvadori. The animations that invade the space surrounding the model railway take up its details, reinterpreting them in an illustrative vein and creating a genuine multimedia story. Conceived as "windows into these imaginary worlds", the projections created by Karmachina amplify the episodes crystallised in the model and project them in space and time.

The dramaturgy studied for HZERO sees a succession of different locations and moments, from the representation of mountain and maritime settings to the passage from day to night, to the changing of the seasons. Having recourse to techniques such as illustration and stop motion graphics, involving the creation of every image by hand, the animators at Karmachina pay homage to the care and dedication that have made the development of the San Giuliano model possible, at the same time offering visitors a continuing evolution of charming and enchanting scenarios.

The passing of time is also rendered by the variations in the **lighting system** studied by light designer **Angelo Linzalata**. The dynamic sequence of light stages conceived for HZERO gives the model a theatrical dimension, capable of giving visitors the impression of going through different moments in the visiting itinerary – from a storm to snowfall, from dawn to sunset.

Completing the immersive setting of HZERO is the **component of sound**, conceived by the **Tempo Reale** research, production and museum education centre and realised together with the technical partner **Mediacare**.
The sequence of ambient sounds specially conceived for the museum comes about from the desire to integrate the visual aspect of the model railway with highly innovative technical audio solutions. The musicians of Tempo Reale have created an **immersive soundscape** in which different musical elements coexist, completely in tune with the movement of the trains inside the model and with the video-scenography designed by Karmachina. Particular attention has been reserved for **involving the spectators**, increased by the diversity of the sound elements that it is possible to grasp depending on your position in the space and from the sound diffusion system composed of over fifty speakers.

Conceived as an evolving project, HZERO offers visitors a **total experience**, in which each individual component contributes to the creation of a unique interactive game reality.

The space in which the museum project takes shape is the **former Ariston cinema** in Piazza degli Ottaviani, a few steps from Santa Maria Novella station in Florence.
The functional readaptation of the **over 1000 m^2** of the building is by architect **Luigi Fragola**, whose project aims to preserve the original function of the former cinema as a space of entertainment and, at the same time, to return a lost location to the city. The proximity to the Florentine railway hub and the deep bond that unites the movie narrative and the universe of the train make the Ariston the perfect site for the creation of HZERO.

The architectural project involves the **two storeys** of the original building, restored and converted for the occasion. Starting with the **grand hall**, which harkens back to nineteenth-century stations, visitors access the space of the **former stalls** of the cinema, which now host the immersive experience of the **San Giuliano model**. The route then continues to the **first floor**, where a **windowed gallery** similar to a railway carriage offers a privileged view of the model railway on the other side. The **former control room** of the cinema is reinvented as the **operational room**, capable of routing the dozens of trains that run along the model railway, while the loggia is used as the **projection room** and **education and training labs** for children and adults, focusing on the theme of modelling.

There is also a **concept store**, conceived to recall the themes of the game and the journey in a seamless way with the exhibition project.

Finally, a special space is devoted to **temporary exhibitions**, which will aim to investigate the rich and multi-faceted world of the train through various creative languages and points of view.
The exhibition programme is inaugurated with the exhibition ***I luoghi del viaggio. Il fischio del treno [The Places of Travel. The Whistle of the Train]***, organised in collaboration with the **Fondazione FS Italiane**, which has begun a precious dialogue with HZERO through its general manager **Luigi Cantamessa**.

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Maintaining the deep bond that links the world of modelling with the dimensions of the game, invention and know how, HZERO has come about and is developed as a space open to every type of public, a place to relive moments from our childhoods or to rediscover the poetry of that complex and multidimensional universe that is that of the train.

The HZERO visual identity and communication is by the Florentine studio of Neri Torrigiani.

PRESS CONTACTS
PCM Studio di Paola C. Manfredi
Via Carlo Farini, 70 - 20159 Milan
www.paolamanfredi.com | press@paolamanfredi.com
T. +39 02 36769480

For press requests and images:
Carlotta Biffi | carlotta@paolamanfredi.com | +39 345 392 4956