

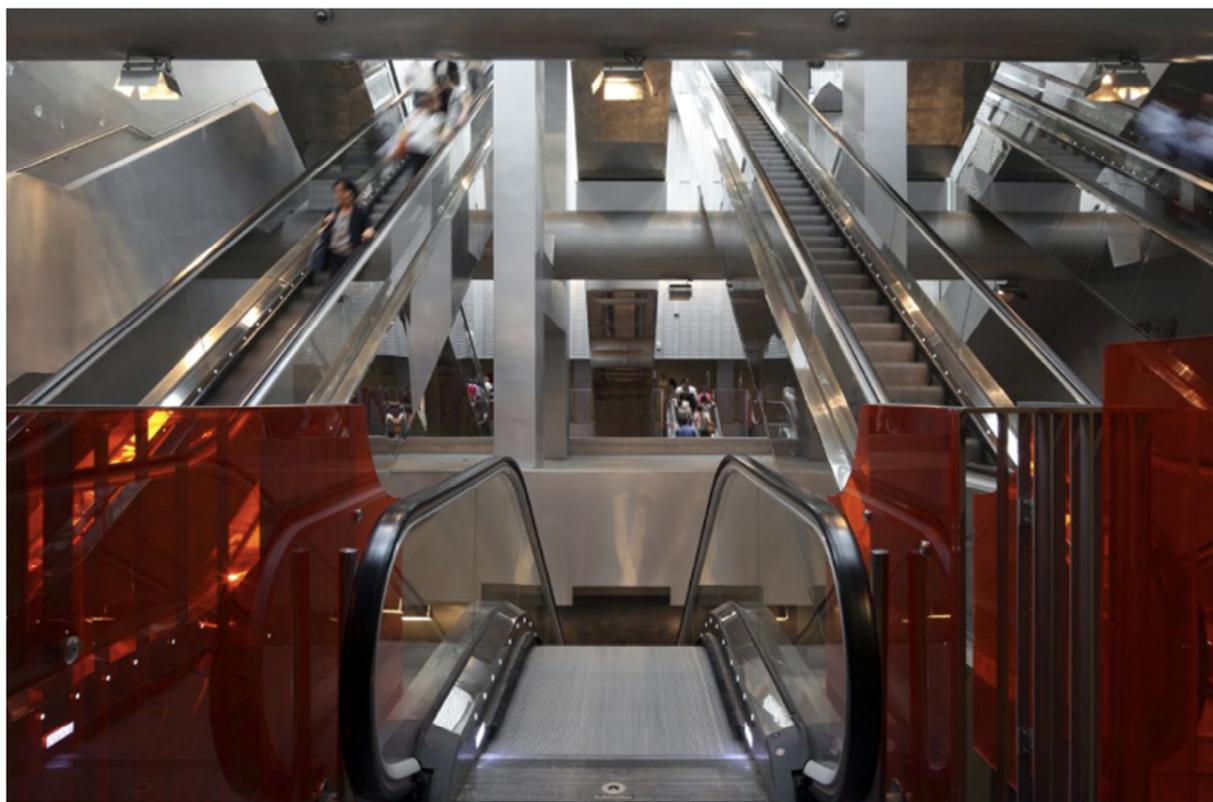


## Piazza Garibaldi project in Naples

*Dominique Perrault*

The underground world is an inspiring and intensely symbolic world. By creating a new type of vertical landscape, architects can give a new presence to all the features, circulations, water conduits, transport systems, foundations or archeological sites, so that they reappear on the horizon of our urban perceptions.

The “*Groundscape*” is much more than an unexploited territory or simple resource for property development. It is first of all a generic zone, which can redefine the grammar and the syntaxes of a new form of urban existence. The subterranean domain also requires a strict level of precision. A negotiation operates within two generic elements that constitute architecture: the void and light. If these two elements are not present, no project is possible.



Piazza Garibaldi – Dominique Perrault Architecture © DPI [www.perraultarchitecture.com](http://www.perraultarchitecture.com)

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**In Naples, for the project of the Piazza Garibaldi, we spoke about the underground city:** a transport hub that overdetermined the entire neighborhood. The biggest constraint was the constant presence of natural risks engendered by Vesuvius and the hundreds of thousands of people who have illegally built on the slopes of the volcano. In addition, there is the constant risk of an earthquake, which requires treating the protection of the region's heritage as a major priority. We took cleverly advantage of the addition of a new metro station to reform an urban space full of vitality but marked by the intensity of the car traffic and the fragmentation of the pedestrian spaces. The *"Groundscape"* formalizes here the subterranean urban system into a whole and organizes the train station into a place of cohesion.

**Ironically, the basement of the Garibaldi square is devoid of any archaeological remains,** so we created our own traces of history and we inserted into the ground a huge gallery. What is below the ground comes up above ground or is revealed to natural light. The project brings natural light up to 40 meters down from the square, showing the stomach and the entrails of Naples and injecting the city's activity in the ground.

**We merge the outside and the inside, the infrastructure and the urban fabric.** The project stages the depth and writes the experience of the burying and the underground by extending the uses and the views between above and below. The Garibaldi metro station isn't a subway entrance but something extending, stretching and giving life to the existing elements of this downtown square. In the central body, the escalators unfold and fold up: a single shiny metal sculpture with hard edges, whose meandering ignores the presence of some impressive struts necessary for the structural stability of the infrastructures.

**Highlight of the journey, the traveler ends his descent in front of a work of the artist Michelangelo Pistoletto,** announcing the platform and his short wait at the foot of the escalators. With a certain sense of proportion, the underground gallery was not hollowed out directly under the buildings. Below their façades, the gallery provides a totally new dimension to the historic city, which is manifested with certain theatricality, giving it a new value.

**If anything can succeed in eliminating the negative drama while injecting life into the underground zone, it is surely architecture.**

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