

Capolago, March 29, 2017

Press release

## Inauguration of Mario Botta's "Fiore di pietra"

The official inauguration of the "Fiore di pietra", the panoramic restaurant built on the summit of Monte Generoso, took place on Wednesday March 29, 2017. Mario Botta, the world-renowned architect and designer of the new building, presented the project to the many guests attending the inauguration. The building, which has been financed by the Migros Culture Percentage, will open to the public on April 8.

Numerous representatives of the authorities attended the official inauguration, including the President of the government of Canton Ticino Paolo Beltraminelli, the members of the Cantonal Council Christian Vitta and Claudio Zali, members of the Federal Parliament, a large delegation of members of the Cantonal Parliament, various mayors from the region. Guests also included the leading figures of tourism and economy in Ticino, the head managers of Migros Switzerland, the president of the Monte Generoso railway Fabrice Zumbrunnen as well as a large delegation of journalists from Ticino, Italy and the rest of Switzerland.

### A long history

---

The Monte Generoso railway, inaugurated in 1890, was one of the first cog railways built in the Swiss Alps. At the beginning it was a great commercial success: in the first operating year alone, 1,313 passenger trains circulated on the new mountain railway, running a total distance of 10,103 km and carrying 19,304 passengers. In the same year, 375 freight trains circulated on the line and the railway company recorded a net profit of over 42,500 Swiss Francs. The visits of eminent guests well illustrate the popularity of Monte Generoso as a tourist destination. Queen Margherita of Savoy and the Crown Prince and future King of Italy Vittorio Emanuele III, Princess Enrichetta of Saxony, King Boris of



Bulgaria, Queen Giovanna of Savoy, the French novelist Hector Malot, the Italian poet and writer Ada Negri, alongside many other great names, were attracted by the appeal of this mountain and came to visit. However, the first financial difficulties arose as early as 1904. After World War One and the following 1929 economic depression tourism declined rapidly. The Monte Generoso railway ceased its operations in September 1939, in conjunction with the beginning of World War II. The authorities even thought of dismantling the railway in order to sell its tracks for iron, which was a precious raw material during the war.

---

## **Migros saves the railway**

---

Gottlieb Duttweiler, the founder of Migros, intervened passionately in favour of maintaining the Monte Generoso Railway. He was convinced that the extraordinary panoramic terrace had to remain accessible for future generations. Migros purchased the Monte Generoso railway company on 12 March 1941 and reinstated the operation of the railway. In the following years Migros undertook to modernize the railway infrastructure. In the 50s diesel engines replaced the old steam engines and later on, in the 80s, electric engines were introduced. The “Ferrovia Monte Generoso”, which was originally acquired as a cooperative and subsequently turned into a joint-stock company, is still a Migros enterprise to all intents and purposes and is supported by the funds of the Migros Culture Percentage.

## **The ground collapses and the hotel closes**

---

The hotel Albergo-Ristorante Vetta built in 1970 in place of the out-dated Hotel Kulm, which had been erected on the summit of Monte Generoso, had to close in 2010 as a consequence of a rockslide that occurred below the building. The dismantlement and demolition of the old restaurant-hotel terminated in mid-November 2014. Remaining faithful to the commitment made in 1941 by its founder, Migros decided to build a new panoramic restaurant. The realization of the new structure was entrusted to the renowned architect Mario Botta.

---



## The Fiore di pietra

---

The Fiore di pietra (“flower of stone”), the new landmark of Monte Generoso, is an impressive work that bears the unmistakable imprint of architect Mario Botta. It is an octagonal building formed by eight “petals” that enclose a central space. On the east front, this circular crown opens to create a long terrace that follows the ridge of the mountain. The arrangement of the “petals” defines a group of five-storey towers that seem to open out slightly and then close again on the upper floors (hence the name flower of stone). The bearing structure is in reinforced concrete clad in grey stone with alternate smooth and split bands. The towers are linked by full-length windows that offer a 360° panoramic view, which extends from the Po Valley in the south to Lake Lugano and the Alps in the north. The world-renowned architect designed not only the impressive building but also the interior spaces. For Mario Botta the realization of this project on Monte Generoso is, in some way, like a return to his roots. As a matter of fact, during his youth he and his friends organized adventurous trips to the summit during summer nights. They would reach the summit at sunset, where they would enjoy the spectacle of the sun rising. Back then, that was a kind of a must-do for the teenagers of the Mendrisiotto region. The civil engineering firm Brenni Engineering AG was commissioned for the structural analysis, whereas the architectural office Marzio Giorgetti Architetti SA was entrusted with coordinating and managing the construction project on site, performed under challenging logistical conditions at 1,700 m altitude.

FIP Studio Fischli SA devised the gastronomic concept and planned the catering and production areas of the two restaurants in the building.

---