



SUPERMARKET OF THE FUTURE

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The Supermarket of the Future, a large grocery store featuring pioneering digital solutions developed by Carlo Ratti Associati, opens this week in Milan, Italy. The new store was built by Coop Italia, Italy's largest supermarket chain. It incorporates facilities such as interactive food tables, smart shelves and real-time data visualizations, which will inform shoppers about the origins and characteristics of particular foodstuffs, promoting more informed consumption habits. The flagship store extends over a surface of 1,000 square meters (10,800 square feet) and employs technologies first presented in a prototype version by Carlo Ratti Associati at Milan's World Expo 2015, as part of Coop Italia's Future Food District pavilion.





At the Supermarket of the Future, more than 6,000 products are displayed on large interactive tables. As a shopper puts his or her hand close to a product, extra information about the food appears on a suspended digital mirror above – as in seamless augmented reality, without any extra cumbersome device or interface. Through these “augmented labels”, each product can communicate its nutritional properties, its origin, the presence of allergens, waste disposal instructions, correlated products and promotions and other data. This experience is made possible by Microsoft Kinect sensors that use body detection to interpret the customer's gestures.

“Every product has a precise story to tell,” says Carlo Ratti, founding partner of Carlo Ratti Associati and a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology: *“Today, this information*



reaches the consumer in a fragmented way. But in the near future, we will be able to discover everything there is to know about the apple we are looking at: the tree it grew on, the CO2 it produced, the chemical treatments it received, and its journey to the supermarket shelf."

The Supermarket of the Future represents a further step in Carlo Ratti Associati's exploration of how data can promote more informed – and hopefully more sustainable – consumption patterns. Shoppers interacting with a fully transparent supply chain can come to a better awareness of the limits and availability of natural resources.

This, in turn, can potentially encourage a stronger use of fresh, local products, and even new social links among people. In the future, we may think about leveraging the sharing economy and peer-to-peer dynamics to create a free exchange area where everyone can be both a producer and a consumer – almost an Airbnb of home-made products.







“We were inspired by a scene from Italo Calvino’s novel Mr. Palomar. In the scene, the protagonist Mr. Palomar enters a cheese shop in Paris and suddenly thinks he’s in a museum,” adds Ratti. “Behind every cheese there is a pasture of a different green under a different sky. Mr. Palomar feels as he does in the Louvre, seeing behind every object the presence of the civilization that has given it form. We believe that tomorrow’s markets will make us feel a bit like Mr. Palomar. Every product will have a story to tell.”









Inside the Supermarket of the Future, the storytelling element is further reinforced by a 20-meter-long live data visualization wall, composed of 54 monitors, where customers can view information about store merchandise, including special offers, cooking suggestions, social media posts, and daily top-selling products.

"Testing interactive storytelling at the World Expo 2015 was a great success and helped us rethink the supermarket as a new gathering place, where shoppers can discover more sustainable consumption habits," adds Andrea Galanti, project manager at Carlo Ratti Associati. *"The new*



'Supermarket of the Future' in Milan brings the same experience to any shopper. It also illustrates how Expos represent a unique chance to develop bold and innovative ideas – which can then migrate into the real world."

"Since Expo 2015, we've been working with Carlo Ratti Associati on new ways of utilizing transparency and innovation to attract customers," says Marco Pedroni, President of Coop Italia. "The next step comes with the opening of this new supermarket in Milan, where we hope to turn an exceptional installation into an essential part of an everyday trip to the supermarket."

"This is the 56th store opened by Coop Lombardia in the Lombardy region, and at the same time it is a fresh challenge we are taking on after the success achieved at Expo 2015," says Daniele Ferrè, President of Coop Lombardia: "We are bringing a prototype conceived in an exceptional context into a supermarket which will need to satisfy daily needs. Also, the Milanese neighborhood of Bicocca, which hosts functions both for work and leisure, represents the best location in which to showcase the evolution of the shopping experience. We proudly claim the uniqueness of this new store".



