

The ground floor



Negozio Olivetti before Scarpa's intervention

Carlo Scarpa in 1957 has before his eyes quite a small space: 21-meter long, 5-meter wide, 4-meter high; narrow, long, and dim, separated into two rooms by a wall, with a little exploitable backroom and two cramped staircases leading to very low-ceilinged second floor and mezzanine. Scarpa works towards a complete re-arrangement of the space: he enhances the good corner position, increases the number of windows, emphasizes the volume's length by demolishing the central partition and including two long side balconies. The relation between the Negozio and the Sotoportego del Cavaletto overturns and the corner position becomes a key element. The renovation offers a true *promenade architecturale* whose rich details and decorative elements are the results of a consistent design, masterfully directed and arranged by the architect. The Olivetti showroom is the place where the beauty of a skilled design is shown regardless of the constraints due to the limited size of the location.



Did you know...?

*The paste of the floor mosaic of various pastel shades matches effortlessly with the **fine-tuned harmony of the colors** of stucco, stone, wood, and other surfaces. The result is a symphony of hues and materials: this is Scarpa's version of the traditional Venetian floors.*



The central staircase



The central staircase, photo of the 1970s

Scarpa designs an itinerary of **interlocked spatial scenes**. The narrative starts from the ground floor that has its static barycenter in the staircase. It is in Aurisina marble and is conceived as a system of broken-down planes that are back in order in the eye of the viewer. The staircase is designed in transparencies, made up of overlapping sculpted steps as if they were stone trays, outdistanced and staggered, to show the technique of pure assembly.

The entrance is vivified by a vibrant focal point, the sculpture *Nudo al sole* (Nude in the sun, 1956) by **Alberto Viani** (1906-1989), a friend of Scarpa's for whom the architect had designed exhibitions at the Biennale. The sculpture hovers above a basin of black Belgian marble and stands out with a marked Venetian quality thanks to the importance given to the water in the basin. Viani writes: "I can't figure out if the sculpture will suit or it'll become something different [...]. I trust Scarpa's genius".



Alberto Viani, *Nudo al sole* (Nude in the sun), 1956



Carlo Scarpa and Alberto Viani



The "water gate" in the backroom



A detail of the backroom of the Negozio

The **"water gate"** in the back, through which goods used to be loaded and unloaded, is covered with a teak grating. The wood is obtained from the *Tectona grandis* (a tree species in the family of *Lamiaceae*) from Africa. On the left is the lower part of the stone and stucco column that continues upstairs. The imposing element is decorative but, at the same time, hides the septic tank. The architect faces the problem of **"acqua alta"** and designs an articulate system of pumps and unevennesses.