

In Italy, numerous architects confronted the theme of school buildings, orientating their projects towards the most coherent interpretation of the directions taken by modern pedagogy. The new educative methods of the so-called "new or active school" which took form, in certain relevant examples, during the first decade of the Twentieth Century, joined well with the goal of renovation of Italian architectural culture. The care taken of the needs of each individual student, and the search for a well defined relationship with the surrounding landscape (whether urban or natural), are the main characteristics which denote

the Italian identity. In this direction, buildings were created with such an innovative intensity that they were recognised on both national and international levels. The works selected, by Ignazio Guidi (who worked in Rome, and across the entire country, before WW2), and of Luigi Cosenza and Mario Ridolfi (who instead faced the altered reality of the Italy's post-war reconstruction), are outstanding examples in this line of research. Particularly in evidence in these works are the choice of an extensive typology, and the role of open spaces, as places where the child, through contact with the natural world, has more possibilities to learn

through the direct sensorial experience. The case of the nursery and primary school "Giacomo Leopardi" is, moreover, representative of a specific experimentation, centred in the model of the open-air school, which was conceived also due to hygiene and health considerations. The School of Mathematics, by Gio Ponti, within the University Campus complex in Rome, exemplifies the capacity of Italian architects to respond, in updated terms, to an educated search for monumentality.

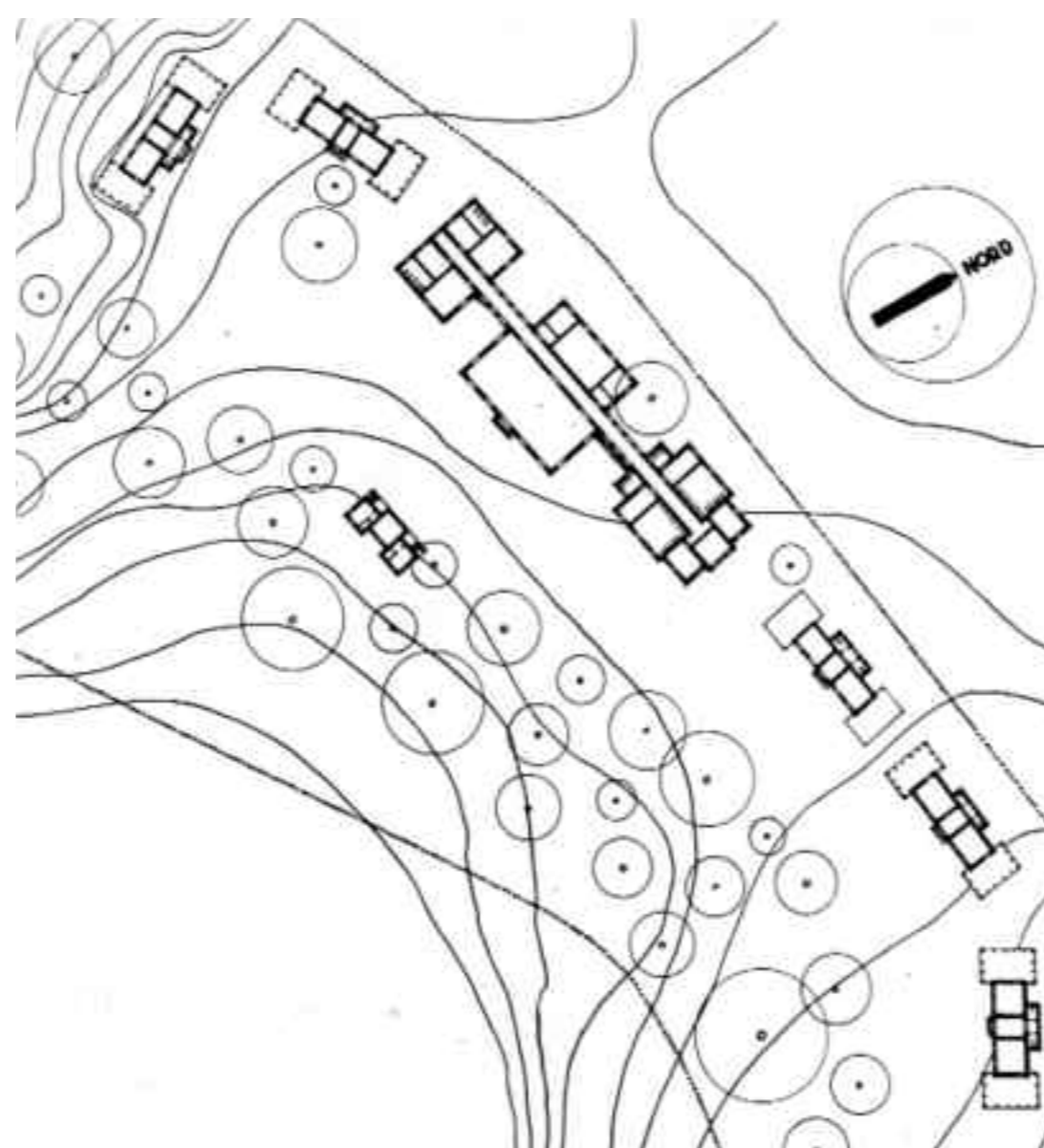
coordinator of the survey *Cristiana Marcosano Dell'Erba*



**NURSERY AND PRIMARY SCHOOL  
" GIACOMO LEOPARDI "**

1929-1930  
Roma  
Ignazio Guidi

Using the pavilions system configuration, Ignazio Guidi places five twin pavilions in the pinewood area of the ex-fortified boundaries of Monte Mario, intended for the school. The pavilions surround a larger building, used for collective facilities. Each of the pavilions has a single floor. They consist of a vestibule, two classrooms, and two verandas, with flat coverings which are supported by thin pillars of reinforced concrete, and originally protected by awnings. The central pavilion, for collective facilities, is made up of a central body, to which narrow walkways connect two lateral wings. The building, which is also a single floor, has at its centre the room used as dining room and for meetings, the roof is decorated in bright, cheerful colours and designs. The lateral wings contain the kitchens, bathrooms, showers and toilets. In front of that, beneath the pine trees, there is the smallest pavilion, used for the head teacher's office and sick bay. The low entrance is marked by a sort of propylaea, and contains, on one side, the porter's lodge. Wide openings lighten the internal spaces of the pavilions and collective facilities building, allowing light to enter. The eight constructions have a total covered area of 2810 square metres, and the school caters for between 500 and 600 children.

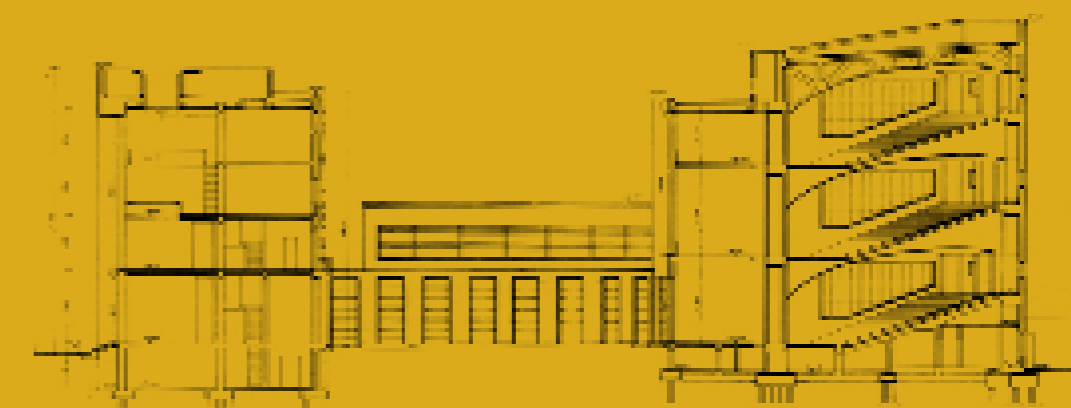


fiche reporter *Cristiana Marcosano Dell'Erba*



**SCHOOL OF MATHEMATICS  
" GUIDO CASTELNUOVO "**

1924-1934  
Roma  
Gio Ponti



The complex is set out in a symmetric composition in which two distinct, opposing volumes are connected by two curving bodies which delineate an internal courtyard. The supporting structure is of reinforced concrete. The anterior building, which faces on to the central square, has a majestic character. The atrium, and three halls used for the teaching of Pure Mathematics lie on the ground floor. The first floor contains the teachers' studios; the floor above is filled by the library; the two floors above this, which are only present at the rear, are used as depositories for books. Within the lateral curving bodies, articulated on two levels, Ponti placed the drawing rooms: the original configuration derived from the fact that no ex-cathedra teaching would take place in these spaces. The posterior volume, of three floors, is the so-called 'tower of classes', in which ample stepped lecture rooms were situated. Each was preceded by an atrium which faced onto the courtyard. For the principal façade of the front volume, Ponti developed the idea of a solid, imposing wall face, relieved by a central cavity, and gaps in the lower section only. It's covered with square travertine slabs which emphasise the scholastic nature of the building. This covering of travertine on the one hand satisfied the more general architectural approach recommended for those buildings facing onto the central courtyard (the "Rettorato" and Mineralogy building are also covered with stone), while on the other hand announced an entirely modern use of stone, through the cut and positioning of the slabs. Indeed, Ponti's design involved large square slabs positioned perpendicularly, parallel both vertically and horizontally, in order to manifest the pure function of the stone covering.

fiche reporter *Stefania Mornati*



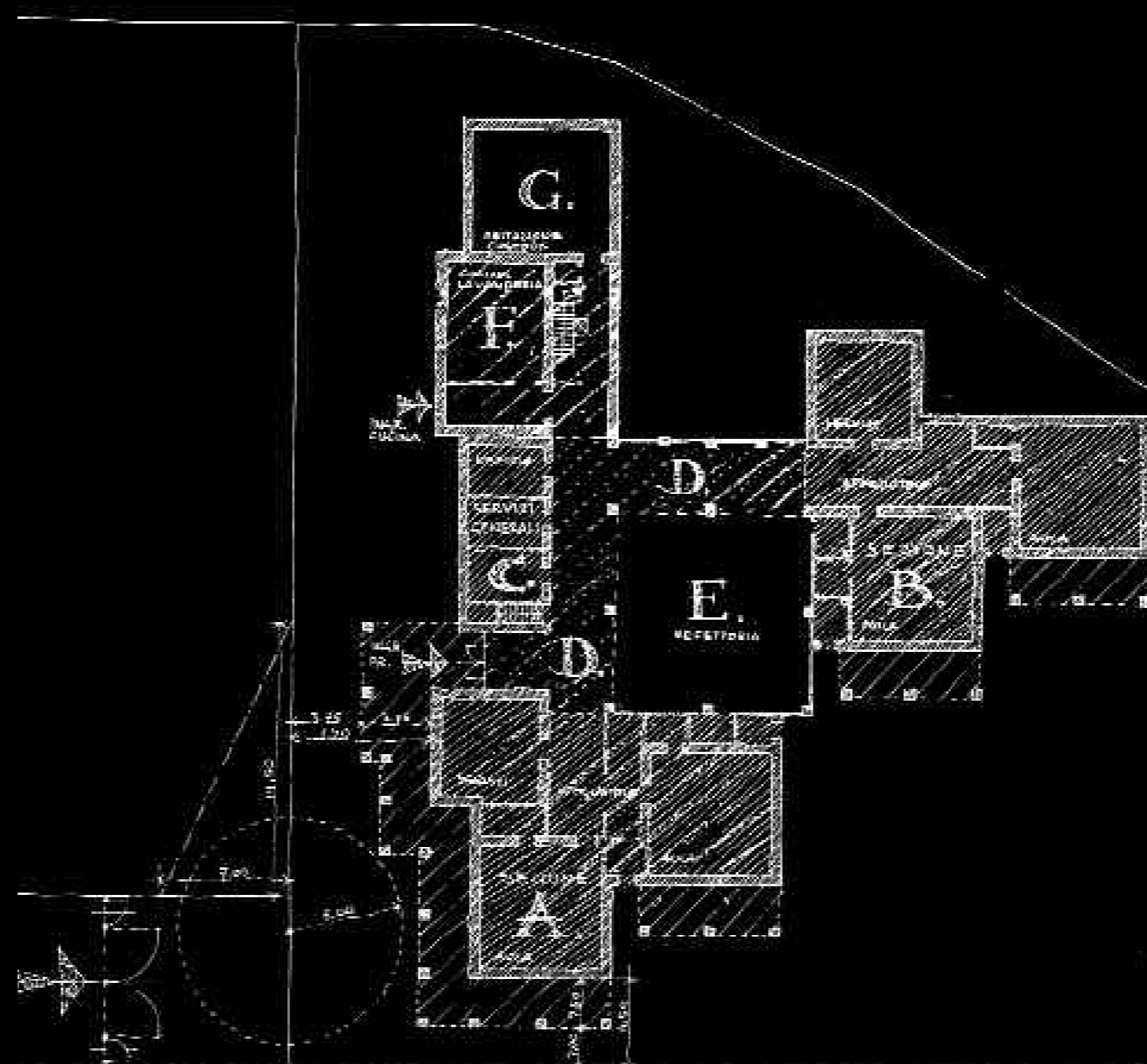
layout: *Elena Tinacci*

**NURSERY SCHOOL**

1955-1964  
Poggibonsi (Siena)  
Mario Ridolfi con Volfango Frankl

The nursery school was built for hosting 120 children. The building is made of a system of 8 squared pavilions, one or two-storey high, grouped in order to generate an articulated organism. The two groups of educational spaces, each of them occupying three pavilions, composed of two classrooms and a cloakroom/sanitary unit, are dislocated to the southwest and southeast of the central hall which is intended as dining hall and playground. Each classroom has a portico on its south side for open-air educational activities. The supporting and ordinary walls are made of calcareous stones which remained without plastering. The angles are characterised by an alternation of travertine blocks and courses of bricks. The flat roof between the pavilions is accessible. The pyramidal roofs of the pavilions have tiled surfaces and are supported by roof trusses, which are made of with exposed concrete beams. For the central hall Ridolfi created a more complex system made of four roof trusses, arranged following the geometry of the quadrature. The roof trusses were carried by four pillars, which are collocated in the middle of each side of the quadratic space of the hall.

fiche reporter *Francesca Rosa*



**NURSERY AND PRIMARY SCHOOL  
" F. GIAMPAGLIA "**

1957-1959  
Ercolano (Napoli)  
Luigi Cosenza

The school building designed by Luigi Cosenza represents a facility conceived according to rigorous criteria of functionality, interpreted in the light of cutting-edge pedagogical concepts. The key nucleus of the school is the internal courtyard, onto which face the two halls of the North and South entrances. The two principal bodies of building, separated by the central, open space of the courtyard, are large areas for reception and organisation. These link up the eastern rooms to the general facilities in the west wing, including the offices of the headteacher and secretary, the library, the gymnasium, and the kitchen. Thanks to the positioning and layered structure of the section dedicated to didactic activities, each classroom is well exposed to the sun during the morning, and is equally protected from the sun's rays during the hottest hours, thanks to the shelters which run along the openings. This regulation of light leads to optimal conditions of illumination. The classrooms, positioned one after the other, are slightly staggered. The partitions which separate them at each level jut out slightly towards the outside, thus marking the boundaries of the external green spaces available to each room on the ground floor.

fiche reporter *Paola Ascione*

