

## Minimum Documentation Fiche

Composed by national/regional working party of Italy/Campania

### Picture of building



depicted item: *Palazzo della Morte*. *The walkway on pilotis of the central courtyard-garden*

source: photo by Chiara Ingrosso

date: 2021

db code

**1.  
Identity of building/group of buildings/urban scheme/landscape/garden**

1.1  
current name of building  
Palazzo Della Morte

1.2  
variant or former name  
Residential complex in corso Vittorio Emanuele 167/C

1.3  
number & name of street  
corso Vittorio Emanuele, 167/C

1.4  
Town  
Napoli

1.5  
Province/state  
NA Napoli

1.6  
zip code  
80121

1.7  
Country  
Italy

1.8  
national grid reference  
40° 50' 20,5" N  
14° 14' 09" E

1.9  
classification/typology  
Housing

1.10  
protection status & date  
L.1497 del 29 giugno 1939

## 2

### History of building

#### 2.1

original brief/purpose

Residential complex

#### 2.2

dates:

commission/completion: 1951-57

#### 2.3

Architectural and other designers

*Project architect:* Studio Stefania Filo Speziale

#### 2.4

others associated with building

*Project architect:* Carlo Chiurazzi from 1955

#### 2.5

significant alterations with dates

None

#### 2.6

current use

Residential complex

#### 2.7

current condition

Good

## 3

### Description

#### 3.1

General description

The residential complex known as Palazzo della Morte is located between Corso Vittorio Emanuele and Via Palizzi, in a lot with a very articulated conformation, on a slope of more than 60 meters. It consists of three buildings, of different typology and heights, enclosing a courtyard-garden crossed by a walkway on *pilotis* that connects the accesses to the buildings placed at different heights. The southern body houses small villas of three floors, so as not to preclude the view of the gulf to the other buildings, while the other two building are "in line". The main access is from the lower level, from Corso Vittorio Emanuele, and is set back from the road. A tunnel dug in the hill connects the external porter's lodge with the elevator shaft leading to the central court and the garden, as well as to the upper floor, on via Palizzi. The vertical connection is also guaranteed by an external staircase, redesigned by Filo Speziale in place of a pre-existing staircase, in reinforced concrete with cantilever slabs, which develops along the tufa ridge.

### 3.2

#### Construction

The project for the housing complex known as Palazzo Della Morte was commissioned by the company ICEVA (Impresa Costruzioni Edili Vendite e Acquisti s.r.l.) to the Filo Speciale Studio in 1951 and was completed in 1957. The building owes its name to the builders and clients, Della Morte, who still own several apartments in the building. The 1951 project foresaw the construction of a complex for private dwellings which drew its settlement principle from the limits dictated by the articulated geometry of the lot, delimited below by Corso Vittorio Emanuele and above by via Palizzi, and placed on a slope of over 60 meters. It was also subject to the Building Regulations of 1935 for buildings located downstream of a panoramic route. On Corso Vittorio Emanuele, in particular, the lot coincided with a strip of land, similar to a right of way, which did not allow the construction of any building and made it difficult to place the entrance. The design solution identified by Filo Speciale foresaw moving back the lift system coinciding with a staircase that developed on the tufa ridge of the Vomero hill, up to via Palizzi. A tunnel dug in the hill housed the elevators, which represented a further system of vertical connection. The complex, therefore, developed at an intermediate level between Corso Vittorio Emanuele and Via Palizzi and was articulated through three blocks around a central space, forming a "C". The building types used were: duplex accommodation for the south block and "in line" buildings for the north and west blocks.

The project underwent modifications during the course of construction, as attested by a new building permit submitted to the Municipality in 1954 and issued the following year. The annexes presented describe an articulated system of levels of the various residential buildings connected by a sinuous walkway on *pilotis* that crossed the central space now definitively conceived as a courtyard-garden. In the same year, work was stopped by the Office of the Soprintendenza because the buildings in the complex did not comply with the 30% slope imposed by the 1935 Building Regulations, even though the height of the upper building did not exceed that of Via Palizzi and therefore respected the limit downhill of a panoramic street.

In 1954 the Filo Speciale Studio included Carlo Chiurazzi and Giorgio Di Simone as collaborators and in 1955 Chiurazzi became the designer in charge of the Palazzo Della Morte project, as he was responsible for the version of the project drawn up that year to restart construction following the suspension by the Soprintendenza.

The changes made to the project signed by Chiurazzi in 1955 mainly concerned the atrium of the building located near Via Palizzi and the facades, for which windows were used to cover the entire 4 metre structural span. Further variants during the course of construction, drawn up between 1955 and 1957 by Filo Speciale and Chiurazzi, mainly concerning details, led to the current conformation of the complex.

### 3.3

#### Context

The building is located on a very scenic lot, on a steep slope, between the Chiaia and Vomero districts. The entire complex has been designed in relation to the site's orography and exposure: from the staircase, which clings to the hill's tufa ridge, to the courtyard-garden, the true "green heart" of the composition, crossed by an articulated walkway on *pilotis* among the tall trees, bushes and flower boxes.

## 4

### Evaluation

#### 4.1

## Technical

High Value. The project uses modern techniques and materials to shape the complex with a strong landscape value. The theme of integration between nature and artifice is resolved in a non-mimetic way, according to an expressive style typical of Filo Speziale, already anticipated in the project for the Metropolitan Cinema-Theatre (1946-48). This architecture, in fact, excavated in a natural cavity below Palazzo Cellammare, may be considered the first experimentation of a compositional theme dear to Filo Speziale: the relationship with the context, whereby it is the natural datum that dictates the form of the building, altering the initial Cartesian geometry in complex, diversified forms and spaces.

## 4.2

### Social

High Value. The building represents one of the most successful interpretations of the theme of the Neapolitan condominium in the post World War II period, intended as a private residence for the middle and upper classes. Its very location, close to the Vomero hill, in a highly scenic area of middle class expansion, where numerous prestigious residential buildings were already standing, as well as the typology of the buildings and dwellings, the construction materials and details, and the greenery, bear witness to the social destination of the complex.

## 4.3

### Cultural & Aesthetic

High Value. The quality of the spaces and architecture, the use of nature and the relationship with the landscape make this project one of the best examples of Neapolitan middle-class housing after World War II. Far from the functionalism of the masters, the project is shaped according to a code, which is undoubtedly modern (also due to the use of certain elements such as white plastered concrete, walkways and *pilotis*) but at the same time perfectly integrated into the context through strongly expressive solutions.

Like in the best Neapolitan condominiums of the time, the relationship with the landscape, with the morphological and topological characteristics of the city, was of fundamental importance in this work: the orientation and light dictated by the presence of the bay to the south, the relationship with the sea, the presence of the banks of tufa forming the ground on which the buildings stand or are dug into, and so on. A fundamental role is played by the garden terraces, balconies and windows which open up the façades to views of the outside, while the interiors are arranged according to their panoramic nature, with the living area directly overlooking the sea and the service areas to the rear. The strong sunlight is used, both in the facades and in the interiors, to create plays of refraction through the use of bright colours and polychrome majolica and tufa.

As is always the case with the Filo Speziale Studio projects, the highly sought-after materials used for the cladding alternate extremely skilfully with ceramic inserts, brightly coloured mosaic tesseras and traditional local fired tiles, glass, plaster, brick and marble to create highly aesthetic effects, always in search of anti-dogmatic modernism.

## 4.4

### Historical.

High Value. The residential complex is evidence of a way of inhabiting, the condominium, which was widespread in the post-war period in Naples, expressed in an expressive yet functional way, with a strong sensitivity to the natural environment.

## 4.5

### General assessment.

Palazzo Della Morte is a residential complex of great architectural and historical value, which has only recently been revalued by critics and historiographers of the sector. Yet it is one of Filo Speziale's most successful works, in which the theme of the apartment building is resolved in a functional manner without sacrificing an original style and admirable integration with the context of the slopes of Naples and the landscape of the bay. Unfortunately, private residential construction in Naples still suffers from an interpretation linked to out-dated national and international interpretations, according to which the speculation of the builders would be inexorably guilty of producing poor quality architecture that damaged the landscape. This work, in which the builders coincided with the clients, demonstrates that high aesthetic levels were achieved even in private construction in Naples in the 1950s. The quality of this work also helps to highlight the figure of Stefania Filo Speziale, one of the most talented architects of her generation, whose name suffered an unjust *damnatio memoriae* following the construction of the Grattacielo della Società Assicurazione "La Cattolica" (1954-58), a project heavily reworked to meet the requirements of the Soprintendenza, which inexorably marked her professional career, so much so that she disposed of her personal archives before her death.

## 5

### Documentation

#### 5.1

principal references

M. Burrascano, M. Mondello, *Lo studio Filo Speziale e il modernismo partenopeo. Palazzo della Morte*, Clean, Napoli 2014

*Palazzo Della Morte*, in LAN. Local Architecture Network (Benoit Jallon e Umberto Napolitano), a cura di, *Napoli Super Modern*, Quodlibet, Macerata 2020, p. 221

C. Ingrosso, A. M. Riviezzo, *Stefania Filo Speziale and her long-overlooked legacy to twentieth century Italian architecture*, in *Women's Creativity since the Modern Movement (1918-2018): Toward a New Perception and Reception*, MOMOWO, Torino 2018, pp. 1046 -1055

S. Attanasio, Stefania Filo Speziale, in *Fuori dall'ombra, nuove tendenze nelle arti a Napoli dal '45 al '65*, Elio De Rosa editore, Napoli 1991, pp. 563-564

E. Manzo, *Architetture del moderno a Napoli tra progetto e prassi: La casa di Stefania Filo Speziale*, in *Il moderno tra conservazione e trasformazione: Dieci anni di Do.Co.Mo.Mo. Italia: bilanci e prospettive*, atti del convegno, Trieste, 5-8 dicembre 2005, Editreg, Trieste 2005, pp. 155-65

### Archives

Archivio Della Morte (ADM)

#### 5.2

visual material attached

01\_View of the atrium, 2020. Photo by Chiara Ingrosso

02\_The central courtyard-garden, 2020. Photo by Chiara Ingrosso

03\_ Volumetric view and roof plan, 1954 (ADM)

04\_ Bird's-eye perspective from the project of 1951, in M. Burrascano, M. Mondello, *op. cit.*, p. 66

05\_Plan of the courtyard-garden at the level of the atrium, 1957 (with additions of the state of affairs from ochre relief) (ADM)

06-07\_ Prospect of the Northern Bloc, 1954-55 (ADM)

08\_View of the main access from Corso Vittorio Emanuele with the staircase, 2021. Photo by Chiara Ingrosso

09\_View of the the staircase in reinforced concrete, 2021. Photo by Chiara Ingrosso

5.3

rapporteur/date

Chiara Ingrosso

1.03.2021

## **6. Fiche report examination by ISC/R**

name of examining ISC member:

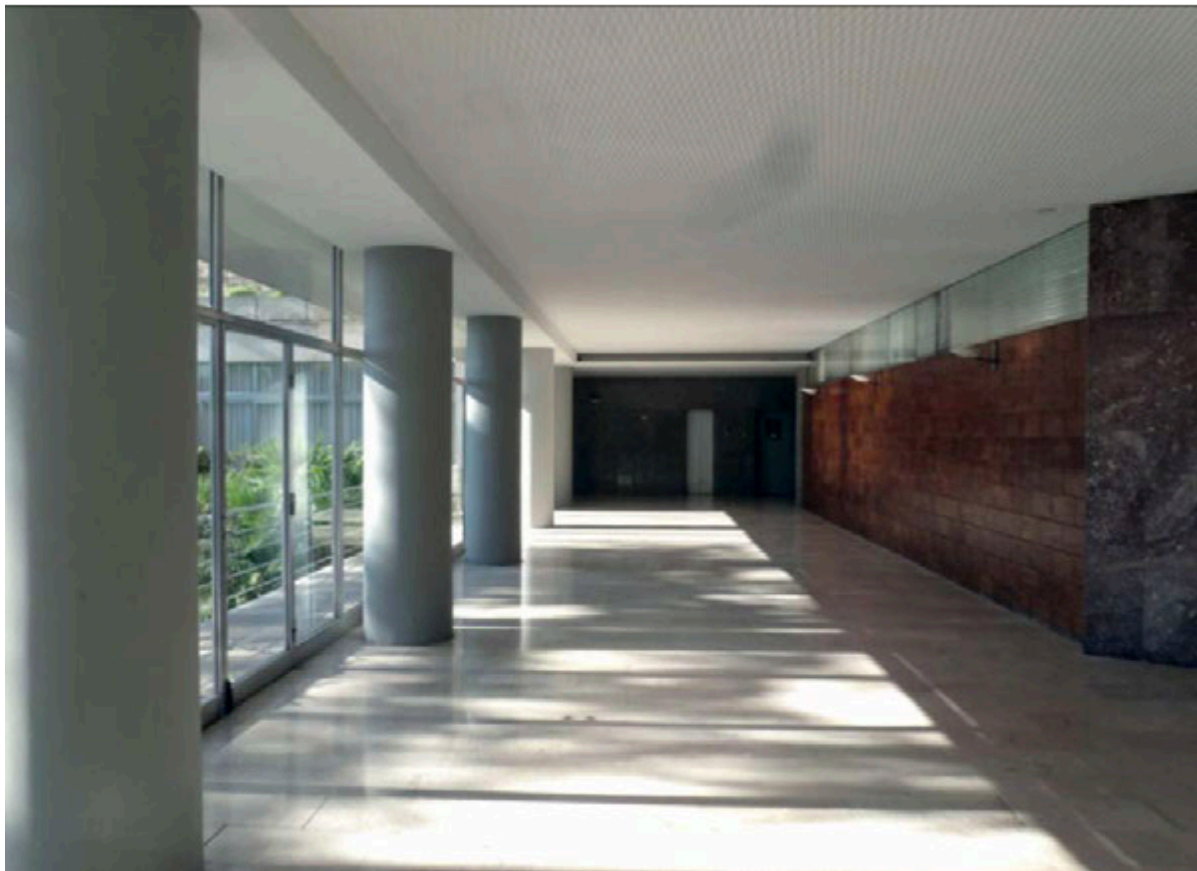
date of examination:

approval:

Wp/ref. no:

comments:

NAI ref. no:



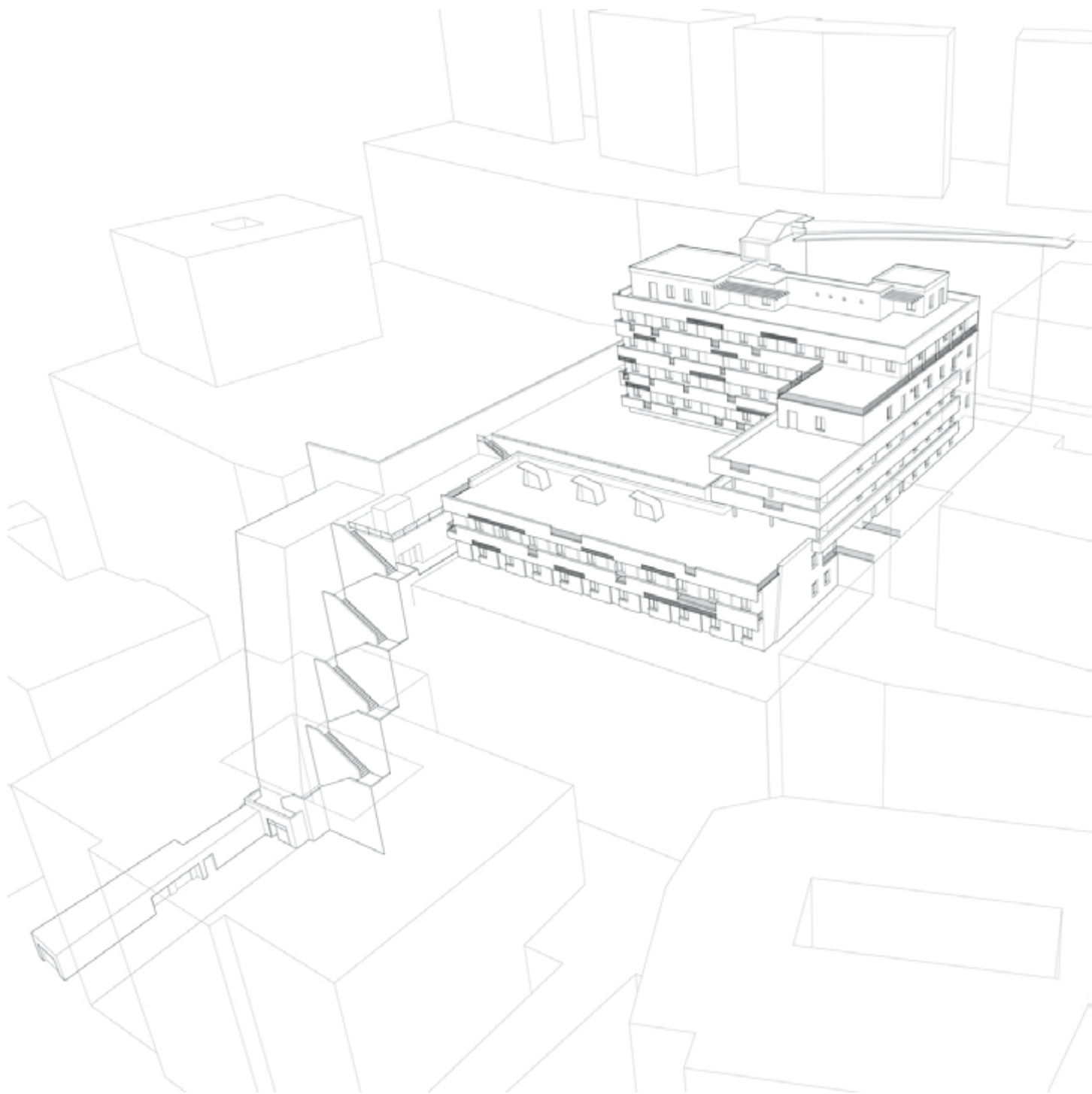
01\_View of the atrium, 2020





02\_ The central courtyard-garden, 2020

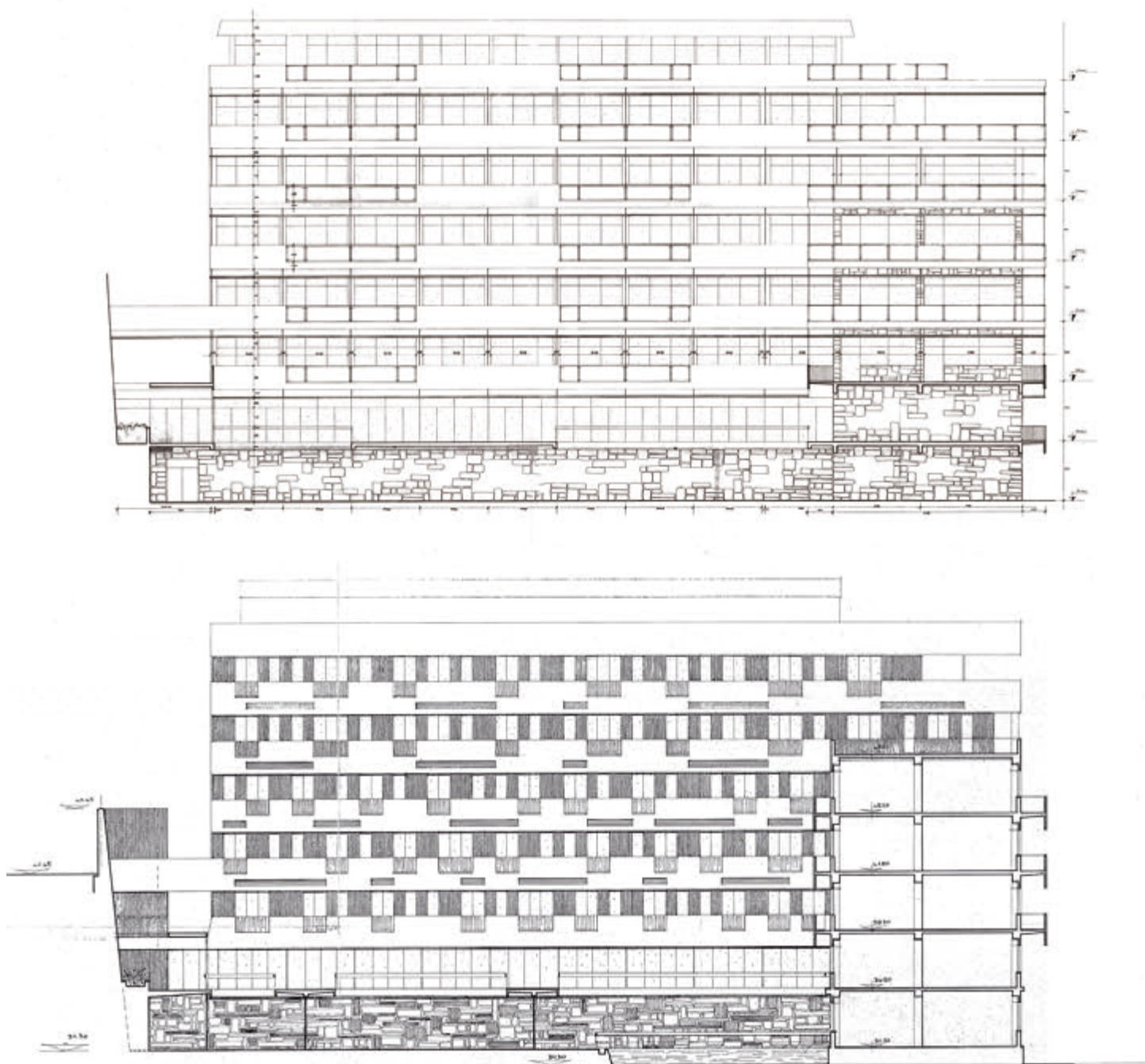




04\_ Bird's-eye perspective from the project of 1951







06-07\_Prospect of the northern bloc, 1954-55



08\_View of the main access from Corso Vittorio Emanuele with the staircase, 2021





09\_View of the the staircase in reinforced concrete, 2021