

## Minimum Documentation Fiche

composed by regional working party of Abruzzo, Italy

### 01. Picture of building



Depicted item: General view of "Stella Maris" Marine Camp  
source: Historical photo Archivio di Stato di Roma  
date: 1944

### 1. Identity of building

#### 1.1 current name of building

Colonia "Stella Maris"

#### 1.2 variant or former name

The building is called "Marine Camp of Pescara" (Colonia Marina – Pescara) in all the documents of its design. Nevertheless the building is also known as: Marine Camp of Rieti, Costanzo Ciano Camp, Stella Maris Camp, Stella Matutina Camp.

#### 1.3 number & name of street

Via Aldo Moro

#### 1.4 town

Montesilvano

#### 1.5 province/state

Pescara/Abruzzo

#### 1.6 zip code

65015

## **1.7 country**

Italy

## **1.8 national grid reference**

42° 30' 38.22"N 14° 10' 04.72"E

## **1.9 classification/typology**

Marine camp (1940-1942)

People shelter (1942-1944)

Marine camp (1944 -1950)

Elderly house (1978-1984)

## **1.10 protection status & date**

The building was registered in 1998 by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities as "Asset of historical and architectural interest". Furthermore the Italian association "Italia Nostra" pushed a relevant process of protection toward the Authority for Architectural and Landscape assets of Abruzzo region. It consisted in the establishment of a special protected area including not only the building, but also its surrounding in order to safeguard the relation between the building, its urban context and the sea.

# **2 History of building**

## **2.1 original brief/purpose**

The building design is included in the greater national plan for the realization of twenty three marine camps. These camps had to host one thousand kids of GIL (Gioventù Italiana del Littorio) according to the General Rules for the Organisation and Activities of Diurnal Camps that explained all technical, logistics and administrative information of this "modern" typology. Indeed the camp buildings were unusual structure at that age that united educational purposes with health care goals. After a long sequence of political events among the promoters of the program, in 1937 the Fascist associations of Pescara and Rieti (Federazione dei Fasci di Rieti e di Pescara) addressed a wide area with a size of 12.000 square meters for the realization of the marine camp in Montesilvano. In August 1937 a competitive bid was established among the companies specialized in reinforced concrete works and finally the "Ugo Silvi" Company of Rome won the contest. Ten months were planned to realize the complex, instead they were finished after sixty months. The main reason of the work delay was the difficult procurement of iron elements, because during the regime, with the penalties imposed by the international community, the request was conveyed to the General Commissioner of War Procurements.

## **2.2 dates: commission/completion**

Competitive bid: 11th August 1937

Construction start: 28th November 1938

Construction end: 10th September 1939

Building test: 26th February 1940

## **2.3 architectural and other designers**

The Architect Francesco Leoni, one of the designers of Palazzo Littorio in Rome, has signed the project documents, conserved in the State Archive in Rome. Nevertheless, some report of the Architectural and Landscape Authority of Abruzzo, suggested Elvise Di Bernardino, who was roman and artillery captain during the war, as another possible designer.

## **2.4 others associated with building**

Engineer: Carlo Liguori

Contracting Company: "Ugo Silvi" Company of Rome (Società Anonima Ugo Silvi di Roma)

## **2.5 significant alterations with dates**

The camp building was inaugurated and it was used for only two years with its original function, the next war period signs the start of a long sequence of transformations. After the war the building, property of the new Italian Republic, it starts again its original function as a marine camp with the name of "Stella Maris". In those years several changes are brought to the building, it changes meaningfully the architectural arrangement and its original appearance is totally compromised (1944-1950). Between Fifties and Seventies, it becomes property of Abruzzo Region and it is given in the care of a religious order. The building is converted in a social elderly house and there is a second important transformation with the addition of new volumes on the back side (1975-1984). Recently, the refurbishment and restoration project, designed by the Architect A.Michetti and realised by the contracting company "Cingoli", includes the removal of some of these past changes (2006/2008).

## **2.6 current use**

The building is currently unused.

## **2.7 current condition**

Medium

The building is currently in a state of abandonment.

# **3. Description**

## **3.1 general description**

The building, known as "Trimotore", has a complex morphological arrangement, based on the specialization of the different volumes that compose it: the wings contain the dorms, the central body (the location of the engine) is the dining hall, the fuselage include changing rooms and corridors, instead on the back side are located services. The plan arrangement has its core on the great circular staircase: it is located between the "engines" and it is centred on a vertical connection shaped as an helix that assign the functions for each floor. The staircase is characterised as an empty cylindrical volume, originally it was designed with four rectangular pillars on the circular edge, but later it was realized with eight pillars with a square section. The beams of the building roof, which are connected with these pillars, are not arranged in a radial distribution, instead they are linked crookedly. This design expresses perfectly an eccentric and dynamic effect to the space of the edge galleries and the dining hall which is two level high.

After the war, the building is interested by several transformations: the porch at the ground floor is closed, a brick cladding is located on the building side opposite to the sea, metallic railings on the roof floor are replaced with bricks walls. All these changes modify meaningfully the bulding appearance and its evocative means.

## **3.2 construction**

The building is characterised by a reinforced concrete structure and the cladding is realised with a masonry frame made of solid tubular bricks with a variable thickness between 45 and 30 cm. Truly remarkable is the design of pillars and beams that sustain the building. On the ground floor, and especially for the wings bodies of the building, the supporting element are realised with a couple of tapered pillars, instead the inner supporting elements of the upper floors divide longitudinally the deepness of building bodies and mark on the edge the galleries and the dining hall in the central area.

The masonry shell is defined with a continuous band made of reinforced concrete of terraces.

These are gently tapered and they enhance the geometric design of the wings that are unfortunately worsen by the pattern of façades. Indeed the façades pattern is based on the presence of traditional windows, instead the original design considered a different solutions. For dorms bodies, the design suggested continuous horizontal windows made of pitch-pine painted frames of three glazing elements with vasistas openings, instead for the dining hall and the staircase surrounding it recommended wide glazing surfaces made of metallic frames.

The building walls are finished internally and externally with a plaster that is called "Terranova" and the floors are covered with several types of pavements as linoleum, Trani marble in the entrance,

Carrara marble on the stairs, Venetian paving with white marble border for all the other spaces.

### **3.3 context**

The camp building needs a restrained relation with the environmental context. According to the sun-therapy principles and the arrangement for a collective housing model, the building is located in a marginal area in front of the sea, outside the city edges and far from the dense city texture. The building, with its wide glazing surfaces and its winged arrangement, tries to define a correct insertion in a natural context through the intense visual relation with the coast of Pescara.

## **4. Evaluation**

### **4.1 technical**

The illusory difference between the modernist appearance of the building and its technical and structural equipment, can represent that kind of "concealed experiment" typical of Italian architecture of Thirties. In this case, expressed with a lower character, it tries to manage the technical innovation of reinforced concrete with the masonry technical tradition. In this manner the themes of technical experimentation, seismic safeguard and the controversial choices brought by the regime, join together.

### **4.2 social**

High value.

The camp, the greatest expression of Fascist care for people education, considered the couple of childhood-free time as the supporting axis of a plan for the modernization of society.

The current marginality of the building is caused by its eccentricity in the urban area where is located, its atypical appearance and especially its irrelevance in the increasing dynamics and developing of the contemporary city. Indeed It is confirmed by the latest refurbishment interventions that were not able to contrast the building degradation and abandon.

It is suggested the opportunity of an intervention that is able to translate its architectural marginality in a urban design resource in order to safeguard the building through a new arrangement of activities of the whole surrounding context.

### **4.3 cultural & aesthetic**

High value.

The camp building, shaped by technical evocation of that age, reproduces the appearance of "a plane ready to fly to gain new destinations and conquests". The powerful machinery and expressionistic awesomeness of Thirties are evident, the functional and typological design of the building is solved with an intense relation with a symbolic meaning. The plan arrangement design is complex and dynamic; volumetric and figurative choices celebrate modern age with emphasis using open floor plan, pilotis, flat roof, in a technical experimentation of reinforced concrete instead of constructive tradition in masonry

### **4.4 historical**

High value.

The worth of this project is the novelty of a design that introduces into the architectural theme of marine camps a figurative and symbolic experimentation which is strictly linked to a machinery iconography. The uniqueness of the building has also to be compared with the singularity of its design phases and with the figure of Francesco Leoni (1886-1960) who is an architect not really known.

### **4.5 general assessment**

Considering figurative and technological solutions the marine camp in Montesilvano has distinctive traits compared to recurring themes of this "modern" building type. Therefore this architecture is a significant part of a cultural heritage, built in the 30s, which is spread on a large part of the national territory. Although this particular heritage has been relegated to a marginal historiography, it represents some peculiar aspects of Modern Movement in Italy, because of its character of

innovative architectural experimentation.

## **5. Documentation**

### **5.1 principal references**

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### **Archives**

Archivio di Stato di Roma (Titolo Fondo Partito Nazionale fascista. Federazione dei fasci di Rieti. Progetto per la costruzione della Colonia Marina di Pescara. N. busta 1368)

### **5.2 visual material attached**

Fig. 1 General view of "Stella Maris" Marine Camp (Historical Photo 1944 – Archivio di Stato di Roma)

Fig. 2 The "Three-engine plane" Design plastic (Archivio di Stato di Roma)

Fig. 3 The project of Francesco Leoni (Archivio di Stato di Roma)

Fig. 4 Plan of the 2nd floor: the dormitories and the large central area of the refectory (Archivio di Stato di Roma)

Fig. 5 The glazed space of entrance. The original design of the spiral (Photo S. Di Cola 2002, Archivio di Stato di Roma)

Fig. 6 The transformations of the camp after the war (Postcard 1952)

Fig. 7 General view of the building before the most recent restoration (Photo S. Di Cola 2002)

Fig. 8 General view of the building after the restoration of 2006 (Photo M. Abita 2015)

Fig. 9 The view of the atrium (Photo M. Abita 2015)

### **5.3 rapporteur/date**

Alessandra Tosone, February 2015

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

name of examining ISC member:

date of examination:

approval:

working party/ref. n°: NAI ref. n°:

comments:

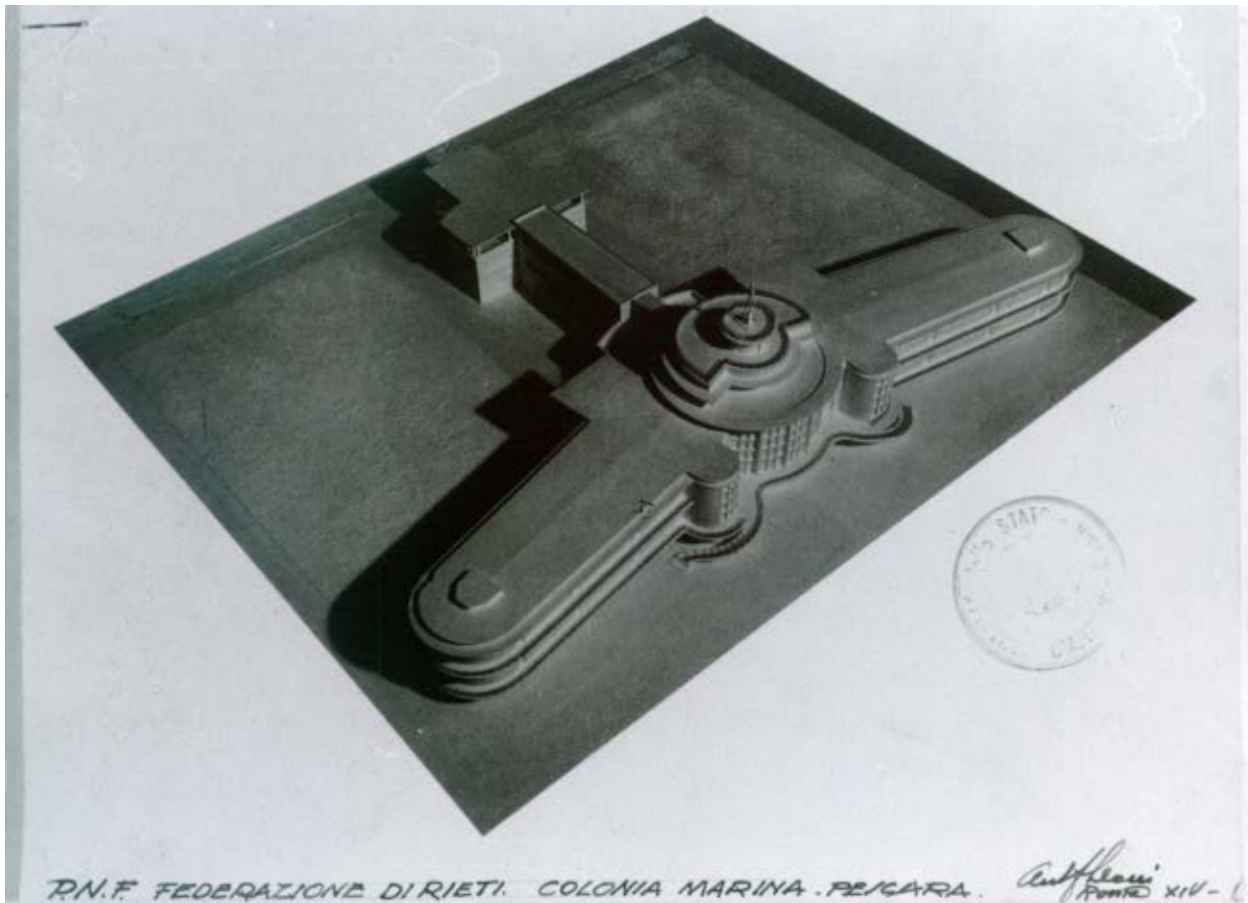


Fig. 2 The "Three-engine plane" Design plastic.



Fig. 3 The project of Francesco Leoni.



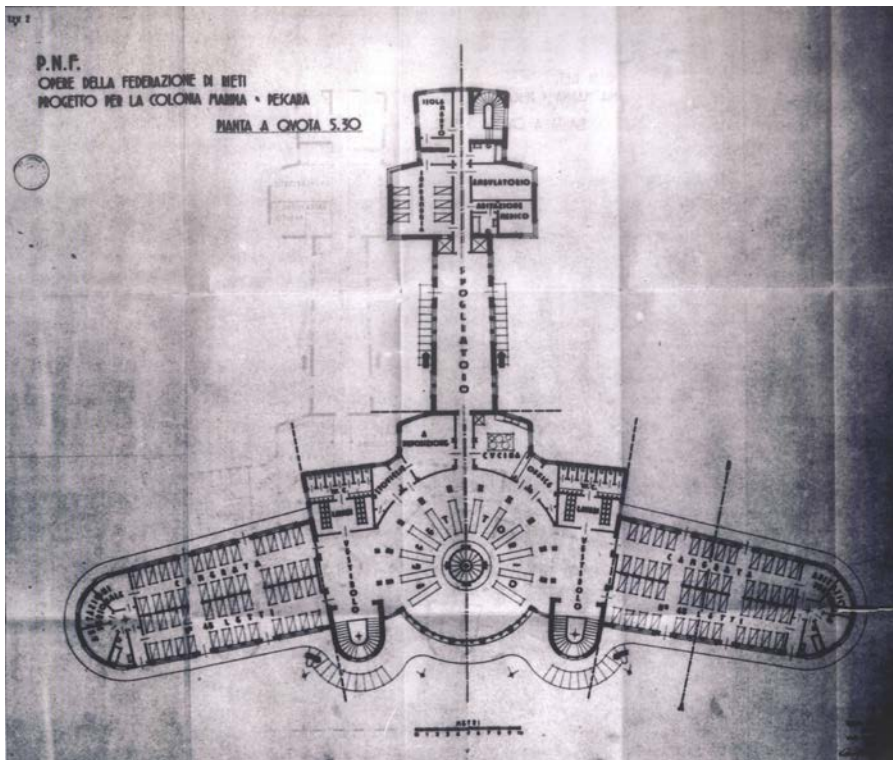


Fig. 4 Plan of the 2nd floor: the dormitories and the large central area of the refectory.

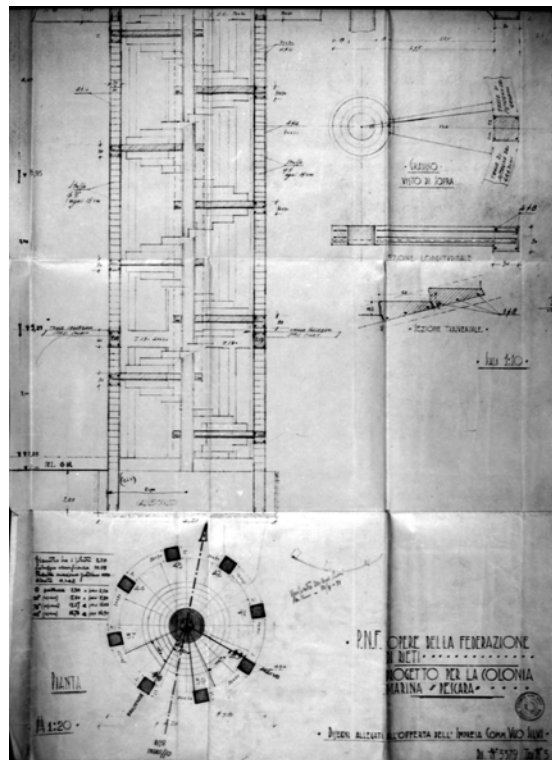


Fig. 5 The glazed space of entrance. The original design of the spiral.





Fig. 6 The transformations of the camp after the war.



Fig. 7 General view of the building before the most recent restoration.



Fig. 8 General view of the building after the restoration of 2006.



Fig. 9 The view of the atrium.