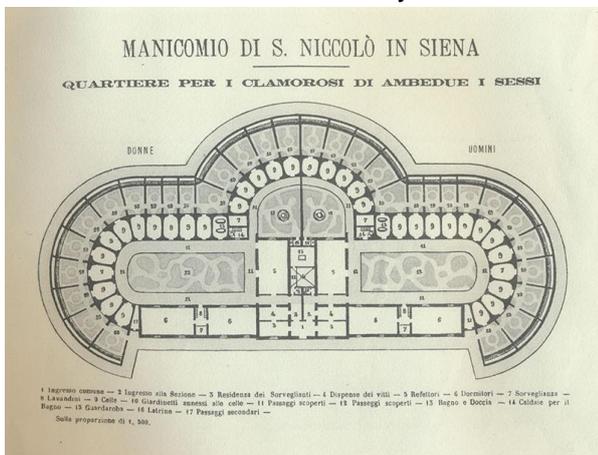


The *Padiglione Conolly*

by
Alessandro Spina and Andrea Friscelli*

Siena is known around the world for its medieval palaces, its picturesque hills and the famous horse race tradition of il “*Palio*”. **A hidden architectural gem provides connects the Tuscan town with Jeremy Bentham.** The *Padiglione Conolly* is part of the now decommissioned Psychiatric Hospital San Niccolò of Siena. It was designed and built in the late XIX century. The project was realised by the architect Francesco Azzurri. **First opened in 1876**, it was reserved to the treatment of the “*clamorosi*”, the most difficult patients. In its original plan, it had two sections one for the men and one for the women. It is built according to the principles of the **Panopticon**, an idea of the inspection house put forward at the end of the XVIII century by the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham. The key principle of construction of the panopticon was the constant surveillance of prisoners or patients, held in their cells, by virtue of a single observation point, invisible to the eye of the surveilled. The building in Siena presents all of these architectural elements, although realised in milder version. The San Niccolò is the only example of Panopticon building used for the treatment of patients still existing in Italy.

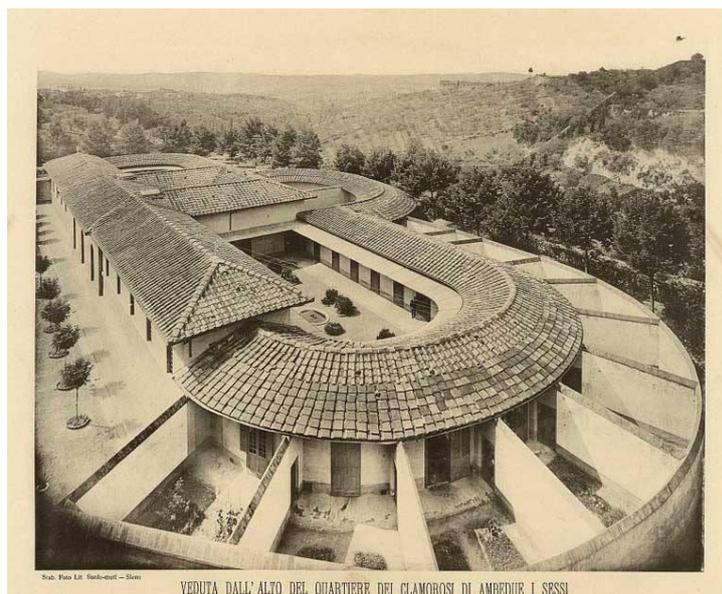
Francesco Azzurri was a very successful architect in his time.



He designed several buildings in Italy and abroad, including other psychiatric hospitals. He also designed the project for the National Theatre in Rome

The architect had made plan for the *Padiglione* by partitioning the structure in single cells, without sharp edges so that the patients could not hurt themselves. Moreover, every cell had a small garden on the back- which could allow the patient to breath fresh air and, as he himself wrote “ *to enjoy the breeze and the sunshine and the scent of flowers*”.

In reality, during the building works, some original architectural elements were changed: part of the individual gardens was sacrificed, the female section was cancelled and the women were moved to another part of the hospital, allowing the construction of a larger communal room.



Azzurri worked in Siena for the Pie Disposizioni, a religious and charitable trust which created, and was responsible for, the psychiatric hospital until the public health reforms of the beginning of the XX Century. He drafted the projects for the enlargement of the psychiatric hospital which saw a ten fold increase in admissions during those years. This increase in the number of patients made it necessary to build a sort of **small hospital “town”** with its palaces and streets in accordance with the idea, popular at the time, of a hospital spread in different detached pavillions. The names of the streets and buildings of this ‘Town of the Mad’ were dedicated to famous psychiatrists, physicians and hospital directors. From this derives the name given to Siena’s Panopticon : The Padiglione Conolly. **John Conolly was an English psychiatrist** of the early years of XIX century. He was the first to propose a “no restraint” treatment and his name was given to the building, within the hospital, that implemented the most restrictive treatment for patients. This apparent contradiction is still an unexplained mistery.



[In these pictures, the plan of the original building an old black and white photograph and pictures of the building as it is now.]

The Padiglione Conolly is currently owned by the public national health system (ASL) of Toscana Sud Est. It is an important architectural and historical monument which should be saved and defended from the irreversible decay and abandon.



A committee of citizens “*Salviamo il Conolly*” is mobilizing to attract public interest around the Conolly and is seeking projects and/or funds for restoring this building and bringing it back to life. In the summer of 2016, the Conolly has been put forward for nomination in the list of monuments “*Luoghi del Cuore*” held by the Fondo per l’Ambiente Italia (FAI) a sister organization of the National Trust, aimed at preserving places of beauty and historical significance in Italy.

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