





Born in Bologna, Giuseppe Vaccaro (1896–1970) moved to Rome after graduating to work in the studio of Marcello Piacentini, the most famous name on the Fascist architectural scene. He took part in his first competition, for the League of Nations headquarters in Geneva, with Carlo Broggi and his nephew Gino Franzi, in 1927. Selected from among the nine equal winners, the Italian group's project certainly didn't stand out for its use of the most modern and cutting-edge solutions, but it did enable them to take part in the joint drawing up of the final project along with another four groups. Again with Gino Franzi, Vaccaro took part in the competition for the Post Office Building in Naples, at almost exactly the same time as the construction, which he implemented, of the School of Engineering in Bologna (1931–35). According to Gio Ponti, it was with these two works that Vaccaro perfected his own personal style. As other works of the time show, his linguistic matrix centered on volumetric joints, balanced forms, largely symmetrical plans and striking compositional precision. His career suffered no significant setbacks after the war, and he was even more active during the 1950s.

Born in Pallanza on Lake Maggiore, Gino Franzi (1898–1971) graduated from the Royal Turin Polytechnic and then began working in his uncle Carlo Broggi's studio in Rome. During the 1930s he also started working as a scenographer, working with a number of directors including Luchino Visconti on *Obsession* (1943). While the first part of his career was largely spent in Rome, he worked in Milan with Melchiorre Bega, also from Bologna, from 1949 until his death. Aside from a number of residential housing projects for both private and public clients, Franzi's work largely focused on interior architecture and shop interiors. Although perhaps underrated by the critics, Franzi successfully combined his training as an engineer with his uncommon artistic talent and was able to move between very different professional fields with marked sensitivity.

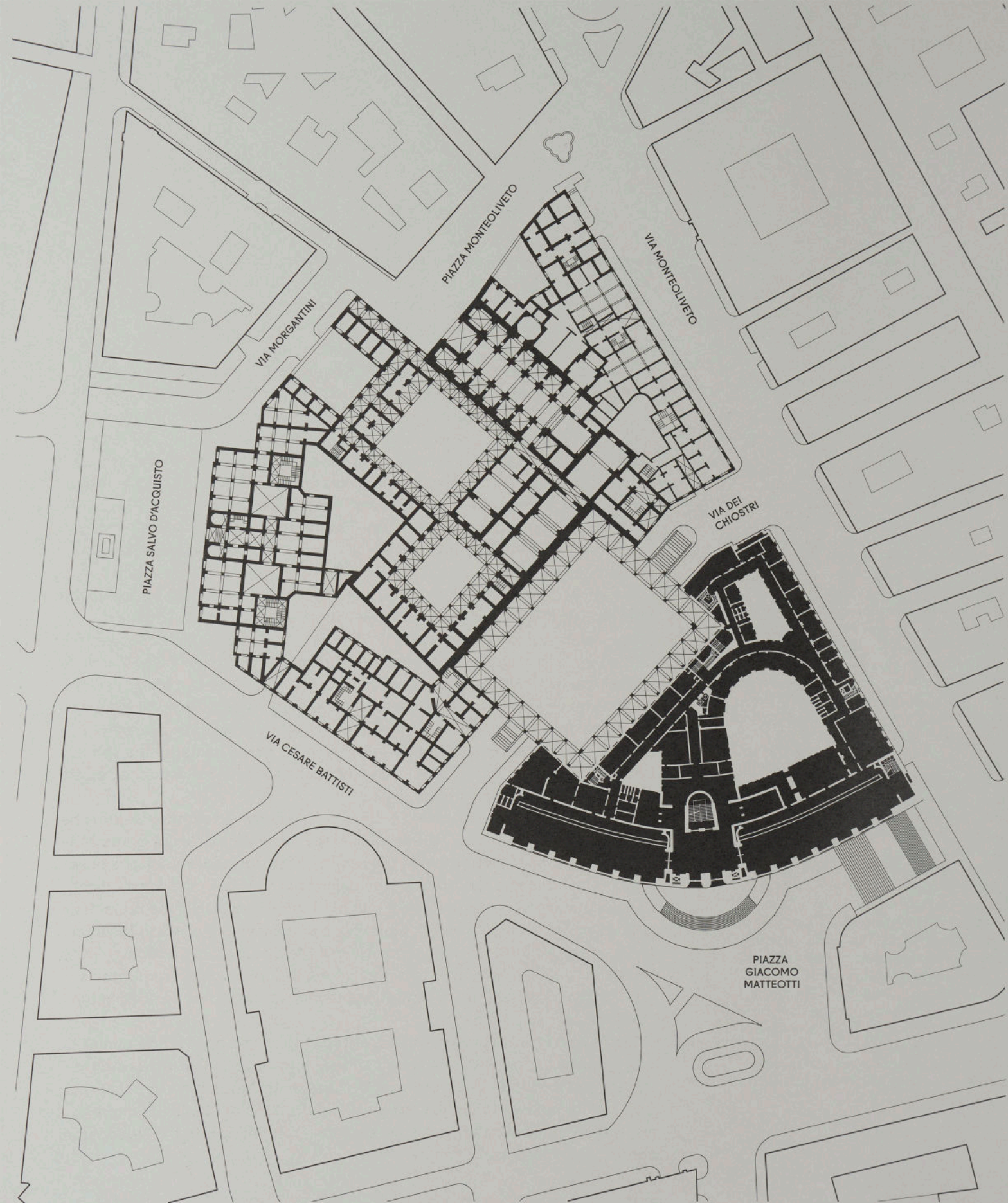
The events surrounding the building of the Post Office Building were closely bound up with the reconstruction of the Rione Carità district, of which the new edifice became the cornerstone. The Fascist era rehabilitation of the district followed the Risanamento efforts after the cholera epidemic of 1884: the old built fabric was replaced as of 1934 with a new civic center with a central plaza onto which the new central post office, completed in 1936, faced. The competition process (1928–30) proved extremely tricky, following which the project, assigned to Giuseppe Vaccaro and Gino Franzi, was subsequently altered to free the final version of historicist references.

The building's most salient feature is its curved façade which, despite a height difference of a good 7 meters, links the axis of the current Via Cesare Battisti, which begins in Piazza Carità, with Via Monteoliveto and the small Piazza di Santa Maria la Nova. It is connected to Via Monteoliveto by means of a set of steps aligned with the square. The curvature of the façade was initially designed to be a circular arch, but was then replaced with a hyperbolic arch, which dovetails better with the edges and maintains the accent on the center of the curve. The design of the main elevation, overlooking the square, is based on a double register, with a dark base, which is actually mostly glazed, and an upper part clad in pale Vallestrona marble, forming a "closed" volume. Rather than a traditional cornice, the attic storey consists of a long, continuous *fenêtre en longueur*, which inverts the interplay of solids and voids. Lastly, the portal features angled chamfers that highlight the effective interplay between the curved lines and a hollow steel pillar in the center of the space, between two tall windows, the vertical jamb of whose frames is concealed to increase the feeling of lightness.

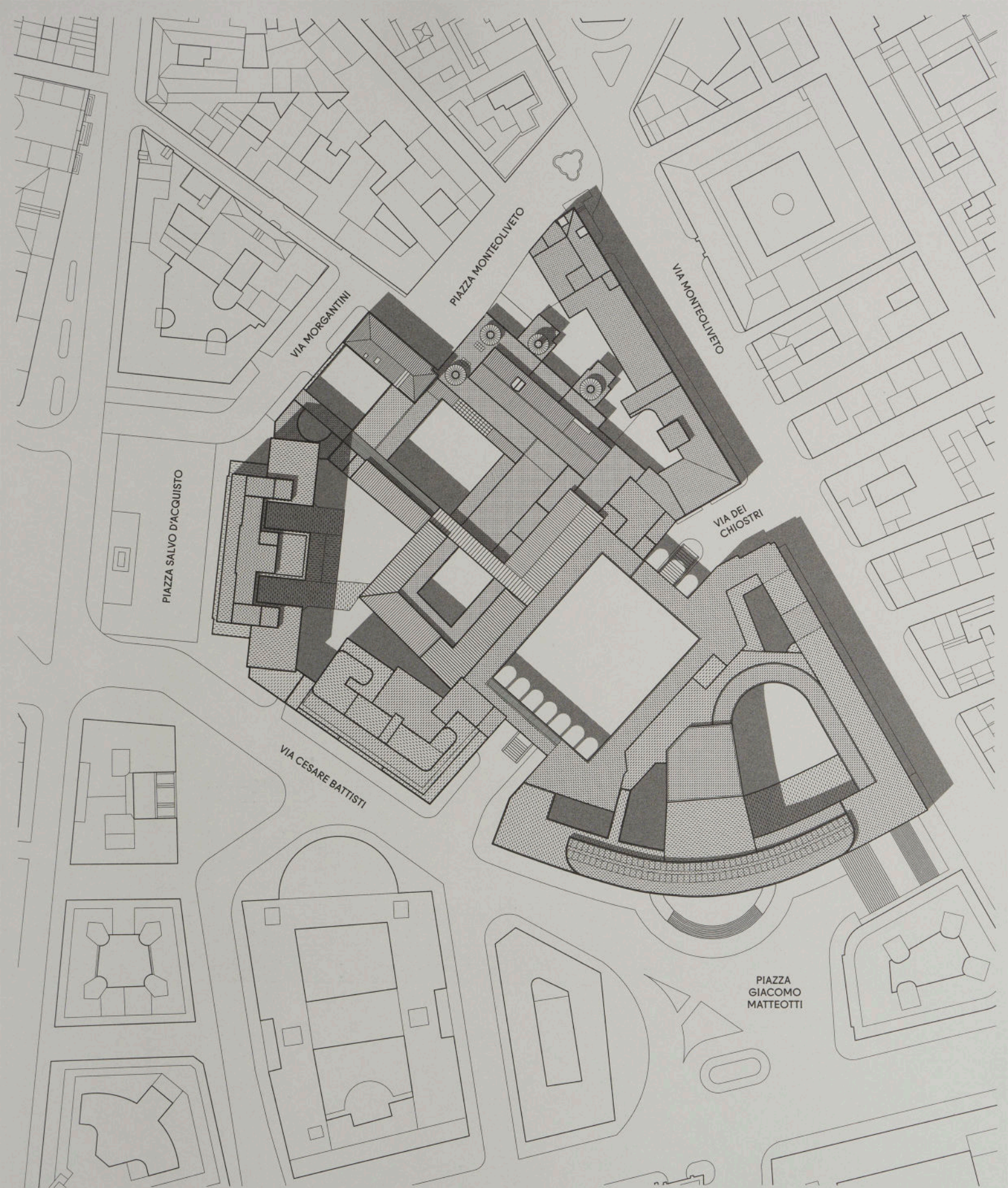
The rapport with the pre-existing architecture is achieved via the similarity between the new building and the cloister of the ancient complex of Santa Maria di Monteoliveto. In particular, the height of the dark Baveno diorite base, which remains unchanged despite the differing gradients, is the same height as the double piperno stone loggia on Via Monteoliveto, while the projecting canopy accords with the height of the base of the loggia. Access to the internal courtyard is from the secondary flank of the building on Via Monteoliveto, where there is also vehicle access, while there is public access from what is now Piazza Matteotti to the atrium and thence to the rooms containing the counters.

Vaccaro and Franzi's building manages to combine the need for monumentality, thanks especially to the design of the main elevation, aligned with the square and the street in front of it, with a desire for Modernity devoid of rhetoric and far removed from the more extreme Rationalist ideologies, more in line with Mendelsohn's expressionist examples and fitting into the Neapolitan context with measured vigor.

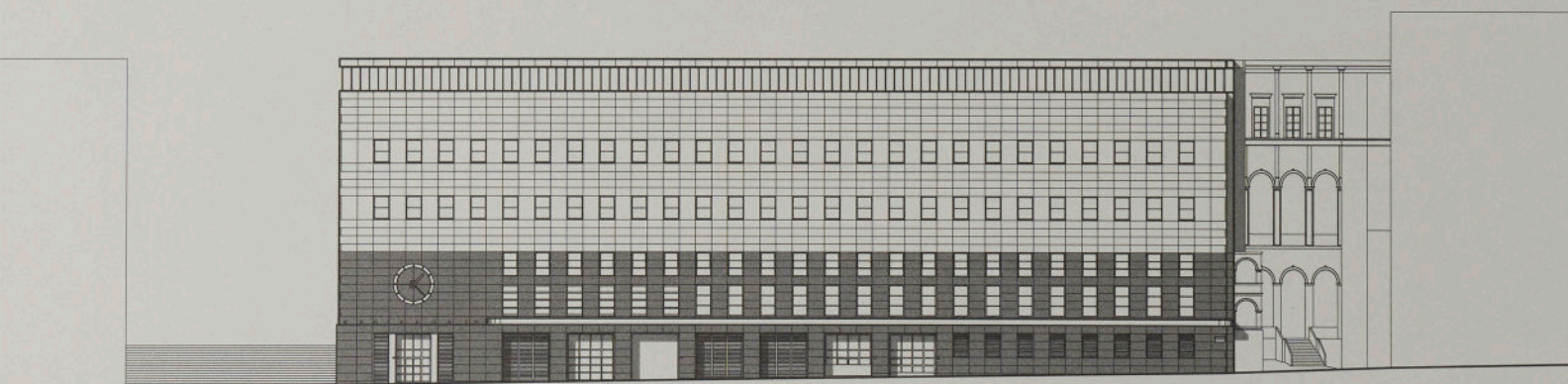
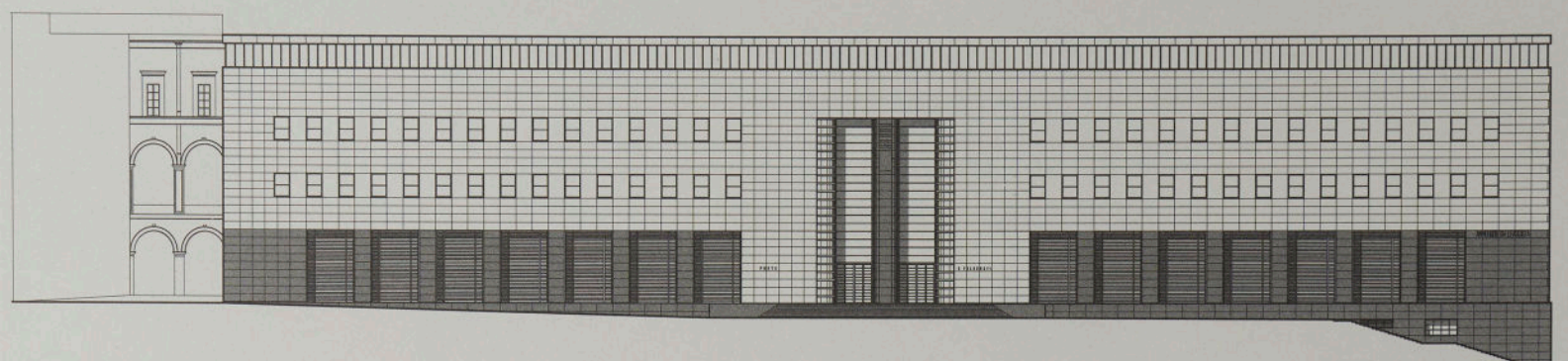














Entrance detail, south elevation

