





An extremely versatile professional with a career spanning over fifty years, Sirio Giametta was responsible for some quite notable work, but aside from a few brief references in general catalogues, he has been largely passed over by academic studies. This "censure" seems all the more anomalous given the international scope of his work, including the twenty edifices for social housing in Barcelona for the Lamaro company (from 1946), the villa in Caracas (1951) and the church project in Copenhagen (1961). Born in Frattamaggiore in 1912, Giametta graduated in Architecture in Naples in 1939 and briefly worked with prominent figures such as Samonà, Piccinato and Calza Bini, as well as taking part in a number of competitions. His career was obviously at its busiest and most fulfilling after World War II. The huge variety of project fields in which he worked, from scenography and painting to design, was extraordinary. He worked for INA-Casa, building residential complexes in Frattamaggiore, Afragola, Scisciano, Marano and Casamarciano; designed several religious buildings and obtained many commissions for funerary architecture, especially in the province of Naples; designed and built tourist facilities, notably the Hotel Cristallo in Vico Equense; and worked intensively on naval outfitting and shopfitting in Naples, as well as on installations for private apartments, such as that of future President of the Republic Giovanni Leone. On top of all this manifold activity, he was also an urban planner and was commissioned to draw up the regulatory plan for Frattamaggiore in 1957.

The great variety of Giametta's work makes it difficult to pigeonhole him within clearly defined linguistic parameters. The Fascist period, characterized by an eager search for Modernism, gave way post-war to works that straddle Rationalism and Expressionism, followed by forays into Brutalism. This heterogeneous approach, stylistic hallmark and results made for a career, the undoubted high points of which include the Mediterranean Clinic, the Hotel Cristallo, and a number of residential buildings.

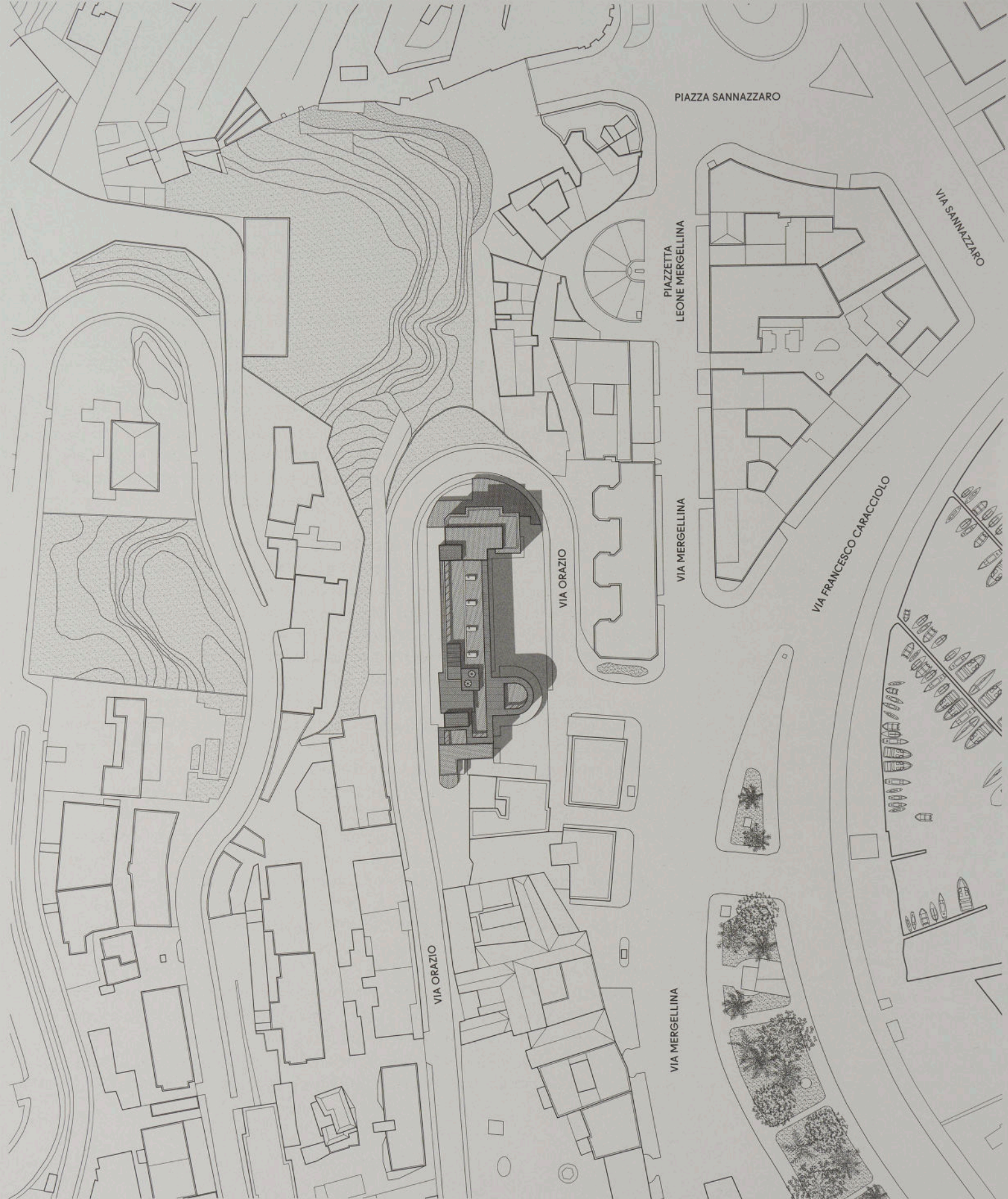
Designed as of 1940 and built between 1949 and 1952, the Clinica Mediterranea was an early work by the Neapolitan architect Sirio Giametta (1912–2005). His previous experience in the field of hospital construction was when he designed the Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza at San Giovanni Rotondo (1940) for Padre Pio – during a difficult period and with a doubtful attribution. He went on to build the Santobono (1947–94) and Pausilipon (1958–62) hospitals in Naples, designing further extensions for more than thirty years, and building other hospital facilities at Nola, Gragnano and Frattamaggiore. Situated on a particularly difficult and markedly sloping lot at the beginning of Via Orazio, where the road performs a double hairpin bend, the Mediterranean Clinic building had to contend on one side with these problems and on the other with the amenity of the landscape of the bay and the nearby seafront at Mergellina.

The clinic consists of two juxtaposed volumes: a parallelepiped block along the bank of rock and a projecting semicircular block forming a tower overlooking the sea. The rectangular-plan block on the south side, overlooking the sea, contains the patients' rooms, while the services, laboratories and some lower-priced rooms were on the north side, facing onto the tufa cliff. The structure, in reinforced concrete like the freestanding plinth foundations, allows for modulated elevations, articulated along the horizontal lines of the continuous, uninterrupted balconies, which bring the two blocks together into a unified design. The lightweight and visually "transparent" metal railings contrive to emphasize the horizontal strips of the balconies, while also making for an unimpeded view from the inside over the seascape.

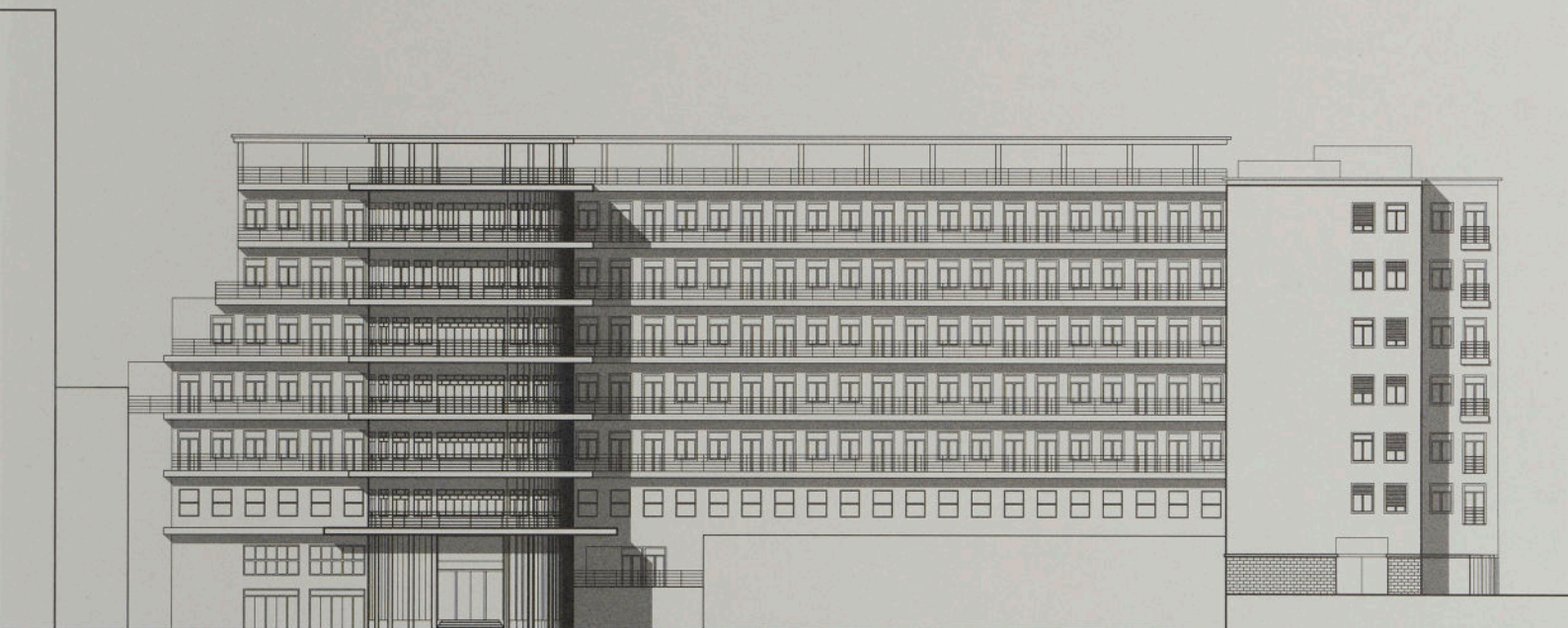
While there are clear Corbusian references, the metal railings first and foremost, the play of horizontal and vertical lines, especially in the volume of the tower, also draws on German Expressionist models and on Mendelsohn especially. Giametta's sketches in particular are reminiscent of Mendelsohn and of his designs for the Schocken department store especially. Equally, as the study sketches show, the concept of the curved element was there right from the beginning of the lengthy design process, a concept that moreover was to recur in subsequent projects such as that for the Hotel Royal in Naples – which never came to fruition – and some of his villas, such as the Villa Mastrominico (1954). The top of the tower block further emphasizes the device of the curved line, achieved by means of a cantilevered roof supported by reinforced concrete pillars, reminiscent of Le Corbusier and Terragni.

In 2007, the clinic underwent alterations and restructuring by the architect Cherubino Gambardella, also geared to optimizing patient comfort.









East elevation

