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Italian-style day nursery

Matteo Zambelli

Studio Mondaini Roscani has proposed innovative classroom and social spaces in a day nursery in Staranzano (province of Gorizia) based on the latest Italian pedagogical guidelines

“We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us” said Winston Churchill. Marc Augé writes that “we know transforming our spaces is not enough to change our social relations, but we also know that these relations take place in those spaces, in a very concrete way. There is clearly a big difference in whether or not you have freedom of movement in your workspace, exposure to daylight, are able to see other people, the outdoors, life.” The Reggio Emilia Approach—an influential pedagogical philosophy developed for day nurseries and preschools by Loris Malaguzzi in the years following World War II—affirms, among other things, the importance of the educational environment.



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Whether we like it or not, the spaces in which we grow, work, and live shape our personalities. Living in an attractive, diversified, customizable space that facilitates relations with others makes us better people. Gianluigi Mondaini, the architect of the new company **day nursery in Staranzano** (province of Gorizia) embodying these ideas, says: “In the day nursery, which provides care for children from the ages of eight months to three years, we sought to create an original and stimulating space, where the classroom is an environment that is much richer in stimuli than a traditional classroom, suggesting new possibilities for teaching and play, facilitating relations among the children and with day-by-day variations.” The three classrooms are composed of two spaces, one for teaching and one for eating. They communicate via a lateral hallway but are separated by a patio with sliding glass doors. The patio is an outdoor classroom: it helps children understand that teaching can take place anywhere. A particular feature is the visual permeability of the classrooms. Parents are able to see their children, without interfering in the educational activities, as soon as they enter the building. The children are also able to see what other children of different ages are doing in the other classrooms, as a further stimulus to learning. In addition to extending the perception of space, the transparency also allows visual relations with the outdoor playground and its seasonal variations.



↑ *A classroom patio: open-air school. (Courtesy Marco Capannini)*

Another innovative spatial characteristic of the day nursery, in line with current pedagogical research, is the absence of traditional corridors. The slight rotation of the two interjoining building units, containing all functions, creates trapezoidal spaces, indoor plazas for informal socialization, parties, extra-classroom learning activities, and play. The school is surrounded by a large playground conceived as a learning lab, a place for exploration and research, fun and recreation.



↑ *The windows in the trapezoidal plaza are set at different heights to allow everyone to look out at the playground. (Courtesy Marco Capannini)*

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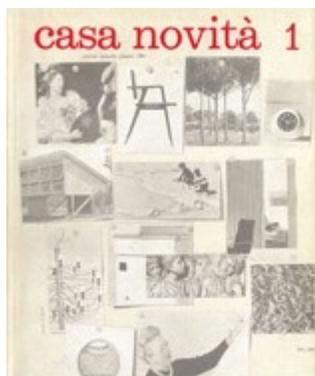
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