

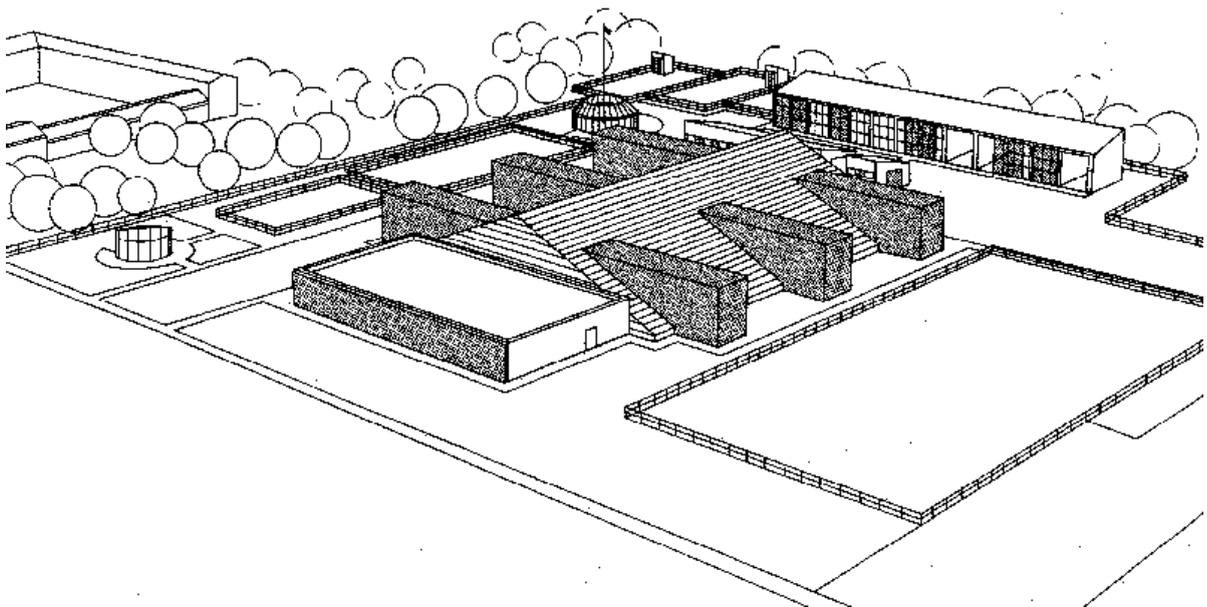
Where children speak to horses: project of a manège for horse-riding therapy

by Silvia Panzeri

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" Talking about the problems of the handicapped is not so difficult nowadays. Nevertheless, it is harder to do something that would be really positive for them," says Danièle Citterio-Nicolas, the technical and scientific superintendent of A.N.I.R.E, the Italian National Association for the Equestrian Re-education.

It is already clear that my project hypothesis focuses on and is destined for people suffering from a serious physical or mental disability. In fact, the project is about a manège for the equestrian rehabilitation, that is a therapy for the disabled, by means of horse-riding. Thanks to this therapy, children and horses are put in relation and, starting from an elementary level, the child can subsequently reach the real horse-riding level, the agonistic one.



Bird's eye view of the centre

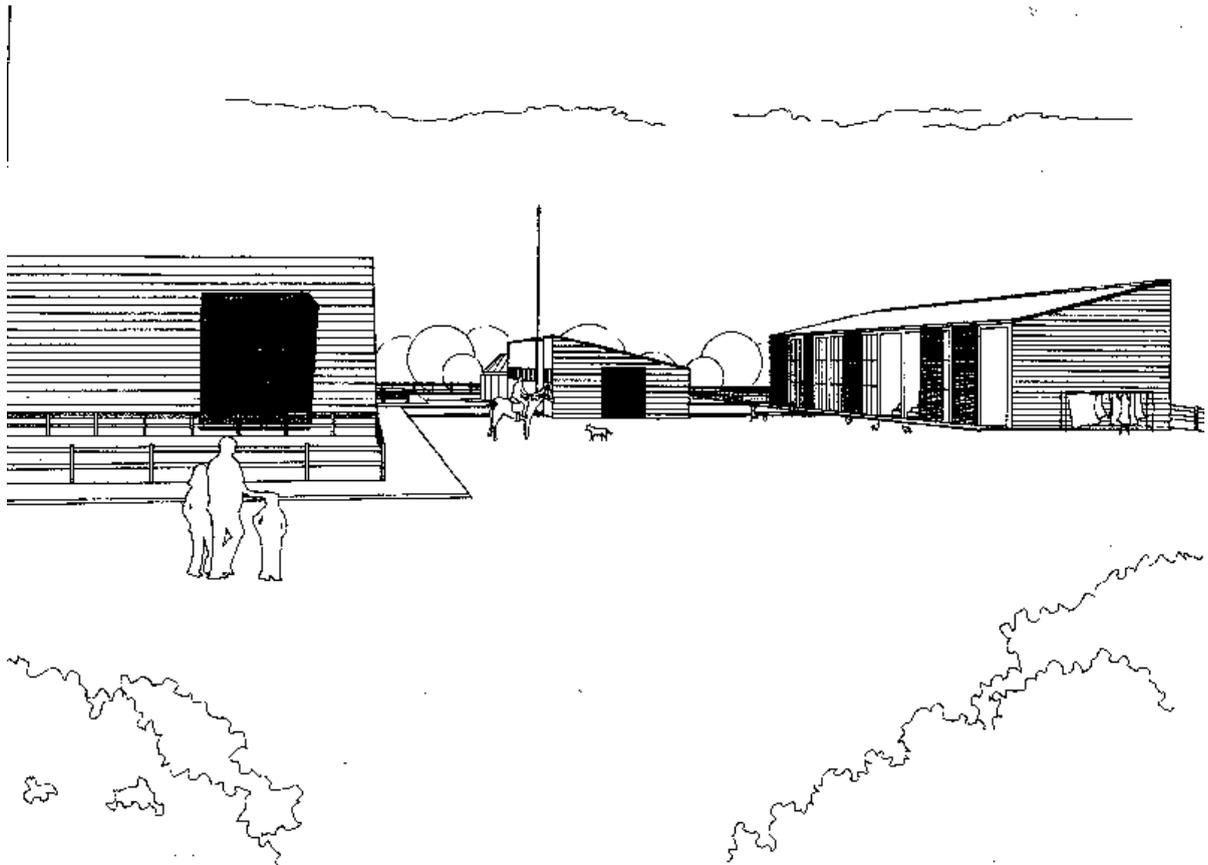
My hypothesis is new in the field of therapy for the disabled, as in Europe there is not a public horse-riding-therapy manège. At the moment there are many little private

milieus which derive from personal needs (sons, grandchildren, relation disabled...). For example, renting a place within private clubs is really a widespread tendency; in this case, people also hire horses and the lessons are given when the manège is generally closed, that is on Monday usually.

I think that these solutions are successful but they are in contrast with the needs of the disabled. In our society handicap means exclusion, that is the world excludes the handicapped from the main opportunities. This is the reason why it is not safe to pursue politics of little spaces, or, even worse, "familiar" politics. In order to deal with this problem in a useful way, we have to examine and compare ideas, share experiences and propose valid programmes.

I have to say that my only virtues, that is my honesty and sensitiveness, made me choose this project. I know that the personal motivations leading to this thesis might sound banal, but they are earnest motivations.

At the beginning I thought I would plan a simple manège in an urban park. Manèges are usually on the outskirts of the cities and that implies high costs of transportation and also makes them difficult to reach. A manège would represent an extra activity among the leisure facilities available in the park and would contribute to an easier approach to horse-riding sports – on this purpose see Bois the Boulogne in Paris, Hyde Park in London and Central Park in New York. Of course, these are the most important examples but not the only ones.



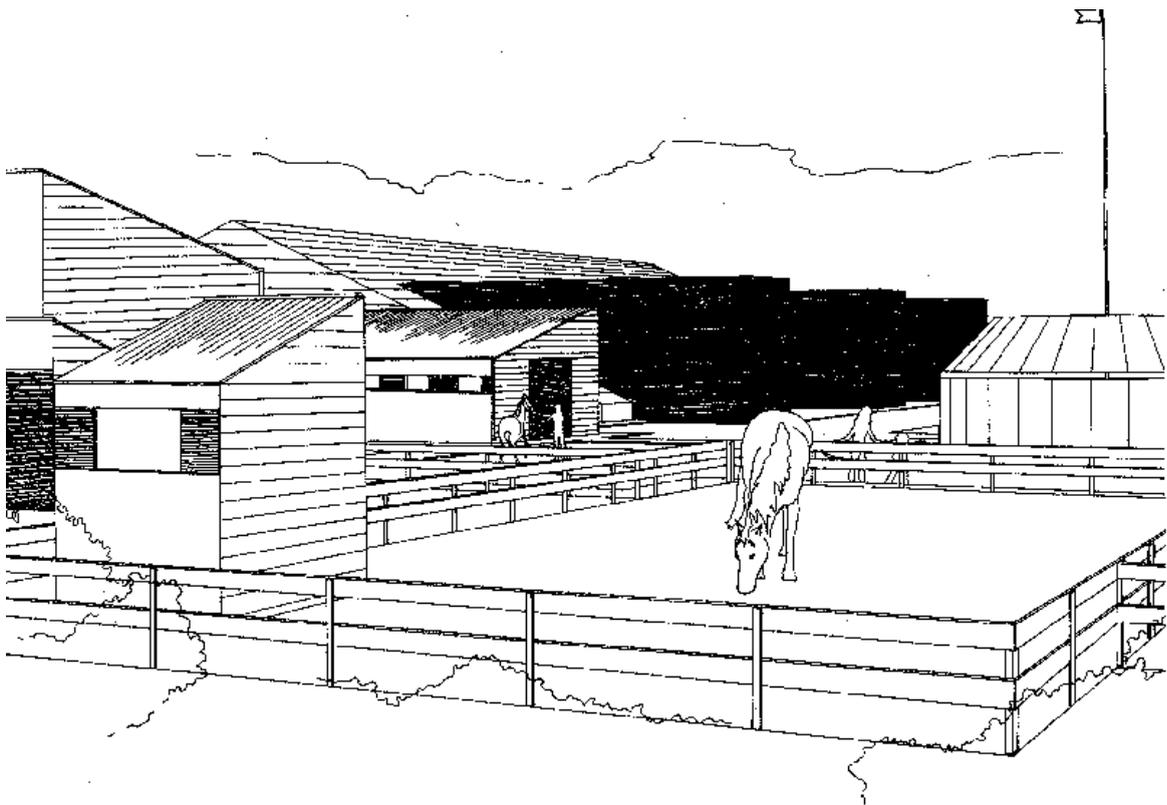
Front view of indoor manège and the farm

I happened to think that, if manèges were nearer to the urban centres, horse-riding would become a more ordinary and less élitist sport. In this case, the costs of transportation would be lower. On the contrary, there has never been a problem in

terms of equipment, as it is only necessary to have a cap - easily provided by the centre itself.

Thanks to this social purpose of my project, I got to know about the reality of horse-riding therapy and, therefore, I started researching this subject. I talked to technicians working in this field; they explained what a centre for this therapy requires, and in my project I carried out a detailed analysis of all the possibilities and needs.

I concentrated on the Parco Vallere in Turin, which is located near two important hospitals: Molinette and Regina Margherita and is the only space already having a little manège of its own.



Front view : the "living merry-go-round," the experimental paddocks and the manège

There is a tendency for hospitals to include this service within their areas (see the Niguarda Hospital in Milan), but the most essential thing is that the hospital has a sufficient green area providing a relaxing atmosphere. This is a very important element, especially for the disabled.

The horse-riding centre presents an indoor manège, three outdoor manèges, a farm, a stable and a porter's lodge and paddocks all around. In the indoor manège there is an area of work, including laboratories, where children can participate to many activities in relation to horse-riding; a gym with the relevant dressing-rooms; a bar and various offices for the therapists; the working area is divided into two parts of 18×25m.

The farm presents a space where there are rooms for few patients and the porter's house, a hay-loft, an area for pet-therapy.

I would like to add that this thesis made me understand that it could be easy to develop simple but useful enterprises for weak people, but, unfortunately, powerful people do not invest in them because these are not profitable or interesting on the political plane.

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