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## Minimum Documentation Fiche 2008

composed by national/regional working party of: **DOCOMOMO Italia**

International working party for  
**documentation and conservation**

of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the  
**modern movement**

### 0.1 Picture of building/site



Depicted item: **Main view of the factory**  
source: **Photographer Marco Biuzzi**  
date: **August 2006**

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**1.**  
**Identity of building/group of buildings/urban scheme/landscape/garden**

1.1  
Current name of building  
**Solimene Ceramics Factory**

3

1.2  
Variant or former name

4

1.3  
Number & name of street  
**7 Via Madonna degli Angeli**

5

1.4  
Town  
**Viatri sul Mare**

6

1.5  
Province/state  
**Salerno**

7

Zip code  
**84019**

8

1.7  
Country **Italy**

9

1.8  
National grid reference  
***Piano Regolatore Generale del Comune di Viatri Sul Mare; Piano Urbanistico Territoriale dell'area Sorrentino-Amalfitana***

10

1.9  
Classification/typology  
**IND Ceramics Factory**

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1.10  
Protection status & date

12

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## 2. History of building

### 2.1 Original brief/purpose

**The building was created to provide new spaces for the production and the sale of ceramics, following an increase in production at the Solimene company, which was at the time based, with furnaces, at the Marina di Vietri.**

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### 2.2 Dates: commission/completion

**Design, 1953; Construction, 1953-1956**

14

### 2.3 Architectural and other designers

**Paolo Soleri**

15

### 2.4 Others associated with building

16

### 2.5 Significant alterations with dates

**In order to facilitate the supply of materials to the highest levels of the factory, a lift was added to the side of the production hall. This led to the removal of a section of the original parapets on the terraces which overlooked the hall, and to the connection of the base of the freight lift, and the floor, with a steel sheet (1990s).**

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### 2.6 Current use

**Ceramics Factory, Ceramics School**

18

### 2.7 Current condition

**Today, the building follows the original plan, except in the central section, which holds the production hall. Despite various functional alterations, due to changes in the production cycle of ceramics, the building remains in good condition.**

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## 3.

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## Description

### 3.1

#### General description

The factory lies on a trapezoidal shaped plot, flanked on one side by the mountain which overlooks Vietri. The plot is orientated along a west-east axis, which was leveled out expressly for construction. The section which belongs to the Soleri project is made up of a full-height area, illuminated by a skylight, onto which overlook three levels of terraces, which are used as workspaces for lathe turners and decorators. The production cycle of ceramic proceeds from the top level to the bottom: this greatly influences the spatial lay-out of the building. The highest floor is dedicated to lathing and modeling; the first stage of cooking took place in the vertical oven (now removed) which connected to every level of the factory; transport along an inclined floor on the lower floor, used for decoration; then the second stage of cooking, and finally the showing and sale on the ground floor, via a second ramp. The side which faces the mountain is entirely blocked, and, on the ground floor, was designed as an internal driveway, for the loading and transportation of ceramics. Today, it holds the horizontal oven which is currently in use. The only view of the factory is outlined, on three sides, by the curving profile of Via Madonna degli Angeli, and is shaped by a partition, itself as tall as the building, and made up of upturned cones of polychrome ceramic, alternated with glass semi-lozenges. This continual line of ceramic and glass lies on a cement (Opus Caementicium) basement, which provides a level base for the cones, uniforming the view from the street. The basement is moreover decorated by plates and ceramics plastered directly in the concrete, which add an element of propaganda.

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### 3.2

#### Construction

The supporting structure of the building is formed from reinforced-concrete frames, and floors of lateral-cement. In particular, the floors and inclined ramps in the large production room are supported by frames, made up of full-height tree-shaped pillars which connect to a rectangular system of beams, within the covering skylight. The latter is an impluvium octagonal pillar, consisting of an inclined attic of lateral-cement, surrounded by prefabricated cement supports, in squared sections. The holes left by these supports were at first filled by glass sheets, and later by similar forms in resined glass. The entire perforated attic is made up of supporting pignatte and beams made on location, coming from a complementary cement attic, and insulating layer. Near the three sides of the facade, the surrounding supporting structure is articulated by pairs of pilasters, in a V shape, inclined according to the positioning of the covering cones.

These last are generated by the overlapping of circular base vases, 18cm high, placed one on top of the other with a layer of mortar, in the same style as a perforated wall. Indeed, after turning, the sides of the vases were lightly crushed, in order to give a horizontal base for the mortar and following level.

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### 3.3

#### Context

The building lies on the outskirts of the Vietri in the vicinity of the crossroad between the state road to Salerno, and the road to the small Madonna degli Angeli church.

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## Evaluation

4.1  
Technical  
The construction of the terracotta wall is the element in which the process of translation, undertaken by the client Vincenzo Solimene from the almost picturesque drawings of Soleri, is most visible. This structure is in fact made up of terracotta vases, rather than bricks, thanks to the far-seeing decision to produce materials directly from the factory's own turning process, rather than buy them. This same production theory is the fruit of business astuteness: by means of a covering of wood and metal net, positioned according to the four horizontal sections of each cone, it was possible to mount the facade wall, according to the correct shape, directly onto the building, without auxiliary support.

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4.2  
Social

24

4.3  
Cultural & Aesthetic

25

4.4  
Historical

26

4.5  
General assessment

An example of organic architecture, the work represents the only building built in Italy by Paolo Soleri. His research on theoretic interpenetration between architecture and nature, and his experience as a pupil of Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin, are put into concrete practise here for the first time. The building is also the only example within Soleri's output to be the result of a close debate with a pragmatic client who, after the premature departure of the architect from the building site, in 1954, would carry out substantial changes to the original project. Although the value of the work is visible in esthetic terms, in the quality of the designed spaces and the suggestiveness of concave curtain walls. However, it is as a factory that the building is of greatest value, thanks to the composition and material choices, dictated by entrepreneurial logic and reasoning.

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## 5. Documentation

5.1.  
Principal references

5.1.1. archives

5.1.2. principal publications

**A Vietri sul mare**, in "Domus", 307, June 1955, p. 9 (redaz.)

**G. Freidiani, *Concavità e Convessità. La fabbrica di ceramiche Solimene***, "Area", 35, November-December 1997, pp.60

**E. Sicignano, *Fabbrica di ceramica a Vietri sul mare***, in "Costruire in laterizio", 61, January-February

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1998, pp. 28-35

G. Freidiani, *Paolo Soleri e Vietri*, Officina Edizioni, Rome 2000

A.I. Lima, *Soleri, architettura come ecologia umana*, Jaca Book, Milan 2000

L. Cardellicchio, C. Conforti, *Alle origini dell'immaginario spaziale di Soleri: la Fabbrica di Ceramiche Solimene a Vietri sul Mare*, in A.I. Lima (ed.), *Ri-pensare Soleri*, Jaca Book, Milan 2004, pp.33-42

*Paolo Soleri. Etica e invenzione urbana*, Jaca Book, Milan 2005

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5.2

Visual material attached

5.2.1. **Supporting framework in reinforced concrete under construction**

5.2.2. **External view (current condition)**

5.2.3. **Detail of the façade(current condition)**

5.2.4. **Production hall (modern photo)**

5.2.5. **Skylight in the production hall (modern photo)**

5.3

Rapporteur/date

**Luciano Cardellicchio, May 2008**

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name of examining ISC member:

date of examination:

approval:

Wp/ref. no:

NAI ref. no:

comments:

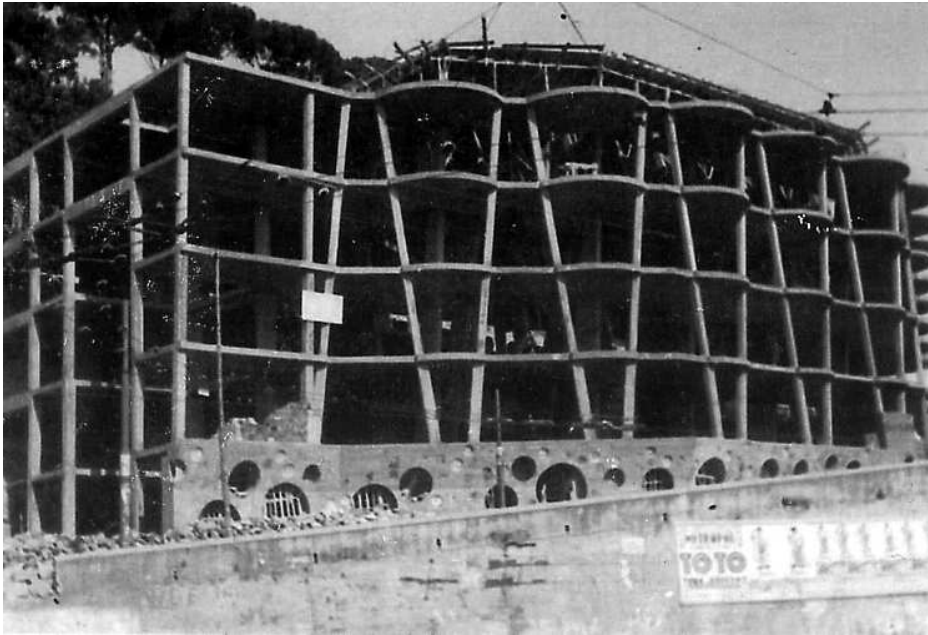
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## Visual material



5.2.1. Supporting framework in reinforced concrete under construction



5.2.2. External view (current condition)



5.2.3. Detail of the façade (current condition)

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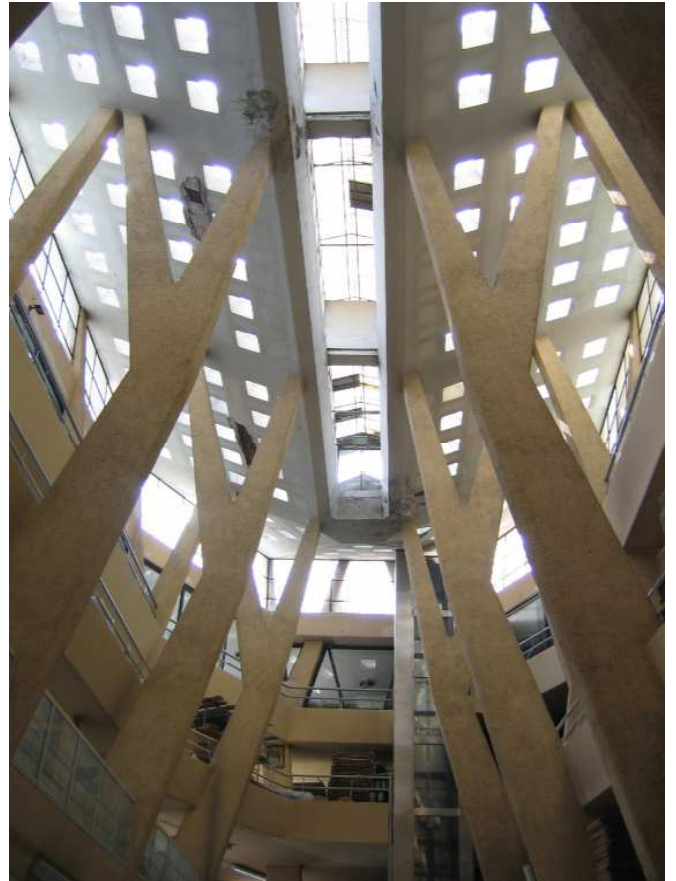
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5.2.4. Production hall (modern photo)



5.2.5. Skylight in the production hall (modern photo)

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