

Technical information

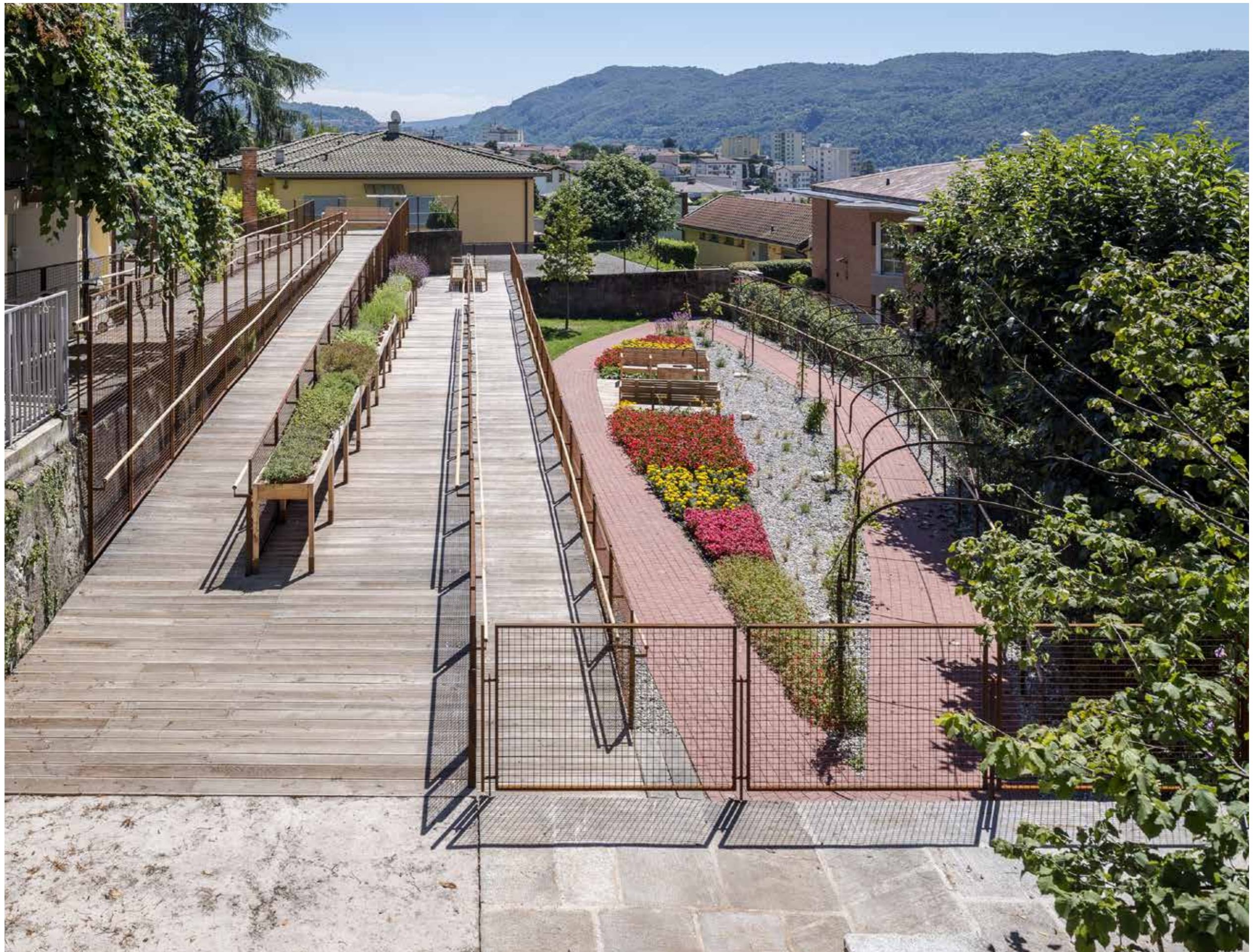
Client: Pro Senectute Ticino e Moesano
 Architect: Enrico Sassi
 Promoter: Rotary Club Mendrisiotto
 Date: 2012 - 2014
 Photographer: Marcelo Villada Ortiz

Progetto

The "Sensory Garden" is a recognizable and reassuring place, in which to experience a sense of freedom and relax. At the same time, it was conceived with a sensory stimulation therapeutic program in mind.

It is an open but well delimited and protected space, appearing as an accessible, simple, and tidy "normal" garden with a sense of serenity and well-being to counterbalance aggressiveness; thus, the garden becomes a therapeutic device in itself. Closed spaces tend to cause states of anxiety; the garden allows patients to stroll safely and to satisfy the compulsive wandering that is typical of a phase of Alzheimer's disease.

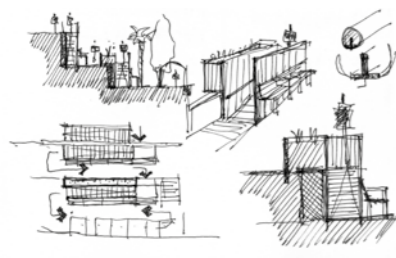
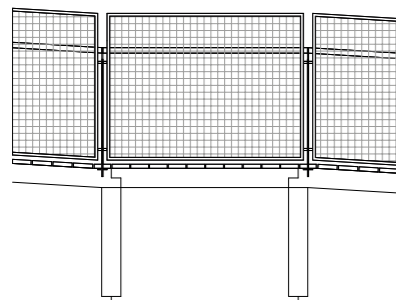
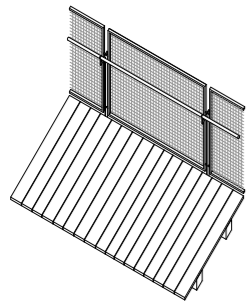
The garden of the Balerna diurnal therapeutic centre is composed of two areas with different functions and appearances: the system of ramps and the ring circuit.



Ramps - The system of ramps and landings connecting the building and the garden (drop of 3.20 metres), is composed of ramps 1.5 metres wide and 6 metres long. Their slope is always less than 6%, allowing disabled people to walk on them, even if unaccompanied. The ramps run parallel to a pre-existing wall. The total length of the wood-paved path is 95 metres. The 1.5-metres-module articulates the rhythm of the path. Like the ramps, handrails are made of robinia wood, and paved by planks with anti-slip fluting.

The third ramp of the path is marked, in its highest pick, by a sequence of 14 wooden tables, which compose a hanging garden of aromatic herbs (such as lavender, thyme, sage, mint, and rosemary). The edge of the table can be used as handrail, while the tables allow even wheelchair bound patients to come closer to the garden, and stimulate the senses of touch and smell. At the end of this ramp, patients can pause on a long bench, one side of which looks towards the underlying garden, and the other towards the aviary, located under the landing of the previous ramp.

The ramps' parapets are metal frames with a metal protection net bearing a natural oxidised finishing.



Ring circuit - the path is partitioned into differently decorated relaxing points. Two areas have been paved with stone: one is shady, paved with ancient granite sheets and furnished with a table and two stone benches; the other, on whose top stands a bronze sculpture named "The Profile of Time" and signed Salvador Dali, is paved with coloured cement conferring it a terra-looking appearance.

At the lowest level of the garden stood an ancient iron pergola, which has been kept and restored. The ring circuit of the sensory garden is a 1.50 metres wide route. Its greater axe measures 32.7 metres, the smaller one 8 metres, while the path is 67 metres long.

Along the circuit, different clearly recognizable interest points stand out: a small place paved with wood with two benches and a fountain carved in an ancient block of Arzo marble, a tree (liquidambar stiraciflua) under which a round-shaped wood bench has been built, the pergola with different kind of climbers on it, flowerbeds full of flowers in different colours, blooming at different times of the year. The mulch around the ring circuit is made of grey gravel, so that the path, paved with artificial red stone, is clearly visible by means of chromatic opposition.

The vegetation demarcates the paths and the relaxing points, and divides the garden from the external space. The different plants used in the garden are not prickly, sharp or toxic, because often patients tend to taste everything they find around them. The garden enclosure, intertwined with vegetation, is covered by jasmine (jasminium) to give the illusion of being in an open space. Water is an important presence: patients may drink or touch it in the specifically designed fountain, and it also produces a pleasant and relaxing sound falling into the basin.

