Ospiti del dragone
Guests of the Dragon

The civic centre of Shenzhen is a huge platform, surrounded on all side by skyscrapers which seem to be isolated monoliths, at war with the sky. The large pedestrian slab of the civic centre ends in two glass buildings held up by a wave built in cement, painted blue. Nobody knows who created this object, even if many claim that it was a well-known Japanese architect. Beyond the wave, there is a straight north-south axis which continues up to a hill where an observatory stands. It is said that a statue of Deng Xiao Ping dominates the landscape from up there. Deng Xiao Ping is also immortalised in a large mural, which is, in fact, a waxed sheet, and can be seen at a big crossroads of two main roads. One of these, the Shennan Road, is the main street crossing the city from west to east. In 1983 this eight-lane canyon was still a dirt road.

Deng Xiao Ping is seen as a lucky charm by this city, because in 1979 he decided that this area of fishing villages and innumerable waterways which is part of the Pearl River delta would become a SEZ, a special economy area where market economics would be tried out. In this way capitalism was introduced into China, within a swollen petri dish which has expanded into a vast urban area.

Oltre 60 esperimenti per abitare la metropoli del futuro.
More than 60 experiments to inhabit the metropolis of the future.

di / by Fabrizio Gallanti
This place was chosen for its proximity to Hong Kong, which was, at the time still a British Colony, and by the fact that the French Cantones culture there would have helped facilitate commercial relations. In thirty years, the population has risen from 20,000 to 14 million.

Shanghai seems like a baroque city, because it takes over the territory where it stands through a system of oriental sizes, which through reform seems rare: this city is very dense, present in 1878 the population is 1.5 million by the end of the century it is 3 million by 1920 and now it is 25 million. The city is not a gigantic urban plan, it has a more dense and moves which are very short by the year 1878 it is populated with 5 million people.

Shanghai’s history is always quite complex, but the city is always looking for new opportunities, always looking for new ways of doing things. In the last 20 years, the city has become a major player in the global economy, and its skyline is dotted with towering skyscrapers and shiny glass buildings. Here, the future and the past coexist, creating a unique and dynamic atmosphere.

In conclusion, Shanghai is a city that has always been open to change, and its diversity and creativity make it a place of endless possibilities.
sono immaginati come frammenti nei quali provare usi ed esperienze dello spazio diversi da quelli consueti, suggerendo modalità di appartenenza alla città disformi rispetto al conformismo soffocante della metropoli.

Il tema del gioco appare con frequenza: ci si può dandolare inerpicati sulle altezze dell’installazione "Double Happiness" di Didier Fiza Faustino / Bureau des Mésarchitectures, farsi sbattere dalla forza centrifuga della "People’s Roulette" di Franceschini e Allende/Futurefarmers, saltare sul trampolino sonoro dell’intervento postumo di Chen Zhen "Danser la Musique", cantare il karaoke con una delle biciclette personalizzate di feld72.

Uno dei maggior successi della biennale è quello di non rappresentare l’architettura appoggiandosi ad apparati di rappresentazioni (video, fotografie, disegni, plastici) che rimandano a un’esperienza assente, ma piuttosto quello di offrire una selezione, molto eccitante, di vere e proprie architetture compresse, realizzate con materiali poveri, spesso auto-costruite, incerte, instabili, transitorie, tanto quanto, in ogni caso, i grattacieli che le sovrastano, che potrebbero essere demoliti e sostituiti in qualsiasi momento.

Ma la biennale è stata anche uno spazio per parlare, per tentare di districare dalla condizione attuale possibili indicazioni future: conferenze, dibattiti, tavole rotonde ne hanno animato le giornate inaugurali.

Una delle più interessanti, "Rural China", ha esplorato il tema della trasformazione dell’agricoltura, e quindi del territorio a Taiwan e in Cina.


Un grande orto piantato a ortaggi e cereali, sopra un tratto di marciapiede, che rappresenta, ridotta in scala, la superficie di terre acquisite in tutto il mondo per sostenere anche il fabbisogno alimentare di Shenzhen. Mais, grano, riso, pomodori, lattughe, alberi da frutto cultivati in Africa, Filippine, Sud-Est asiatico e America Latina: una prova ulteriore di come i nostri destini siano indissolubilmente intrecciati e di come Shenzhen sia oggi uno dei cuori del mondo.

interesting aspects of the biennale is the way it displays architecture not just by using forms of representation (videos, photos, drawings, models) which hark back to an experience which is absent, but rather by offering an exciting selection of real forms of architecture on a different, smaller, scale, made with cheap materials, and which are often self-built, unstable and transitory, just like (in reality) the skyscrapers which tower above, and which can be knocked down and rebuilt in an instant.

But the biennale has also been a place for discussions and debates about the future of architecture and urban planning. Lively meetings and round tables debates took place in the opening days of the exhibition. One of the most interesting was called "Rural China", and it looked at transformations in agriculture, as well as at changing landscapes in Taiwan and in China. A few kilometres away, in the Nanshan district, the inhabitants have succeeded in their demand that the work "Land Grab City: A Geography of Spatial Prostheses" by Joseph Grima and Jeffrey Johnson with José Esparza will not be dismantled after the show. It consists of a large garden planted with vegetables and cereals, above a section of the pavement, which represents on a small scale the amount of land purchased right across the world which is needed in order to sustain Shenzhen’s food requirements. Corn, grain, rice, tomatoes, lettuce, fruit trees grown in Africa, the Philippines, South-East Asia and Latin America. This is just another example of how our futures are intimately linked and how Shenzhen is today one of the hearts of the world.