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13 ECHOES CONVERGE Using string and a computer-controlled cutting system, Ball-Nogues Studio has created a sculptural ceiling. Stefano Boeri's *Off the Pedestal*, an investigation into the urban environment with a non-anthropocentric orientation, is seen in the background.

14 OBJECT ARCHIVE Artist Madelon Vriesendorp's collection of souvenirs, windup toys and marginalia is displayed alongside her paintings and drawings. Originally commissioned by the Architectural Association in London, the exhibition is travelling on the international circuit.



15 SORRY FOR TAKING YOUR MIRRORS Aether Architecture wires up reused objects to create hybridized spaces with high-tech/low-tech, architectural/cultural attributes.

16 MOCK-UP, BEIJING 2008 A spare yet effective installation by Herzog & de Meuron and Chinese artist Ai Weiwei uses bamboo poles and chairs to fill the first chamber in the Italian pavilion.



Was there not enough time, too much reliance on computer wizardry to conjure up the beyond, or did something else contribute to the pervasive sense of disappointment in the Arsenale installations? Italian design theorist Andrea Branzi – who presented one of the 12 projects in Garofalo's housing show – suggests the problem is who was selected to represent the theme. "The theme Architecture Beyond Building is part of the tradition of the modern movement (futurists, radicals, etc.)," he says, "but it was proposed to architects who are not interested in this type of research. The result is many improvised interventions, artistic installations by architects that have been always interested in the exclusive activity of 'building.'" In fact, this biennale awarded the Golden Lion for lifetime achievement to Frank Gehry, "a great architect," says Branzi, "but surely a champion of 'building,' even if in a deconstructed style."

The line between research and bravura in an exhibition of this sort – and even sometimes in practice – tends to get slippery. According to Bruce Kuwabara of Toronto's KPMB, the dichotomy between the "signature installations by branded global architects" and the Italian exhibit on housing, both in the Arsenale, reflects the "growing gap in the practice of architecture today – represented on one hand by the Italians, for whom building is and will always be the fundamental outcome of the architectural project; and on the other, architecture as a project of research, experimentation and development." Betsy's call for architecture to go beyond buildings because "buildings are not enough. They are big and wasteful accumulations of natural resources that are difficult to adapt to the continually changing conditions of modern life," strikes a chord with Kuwabara. "Yet the global instability catalyzed by the sub-prime mortgage crisis makes Garofalo's housing project – which offers concrete solutions to a major social problem – equally timely and relevant," says Kuwabara.

Economic and environmental crises, geopolitical and social realities – shouldn't these be the focus on the other side of building? "We are living in a really funny time right now," says Winka Dubbeldam of New York's