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SCHWERPUNKT

GENIUS LOCI

*Besucherzentrum Gruta das
Torres auf Pico Island (P) •
Museum und Forschungs-
zentrum Madinat al-Zahra
bei Córdoba (E) • Pavillon
des Landes de Gascogne in
Sabres (F) • Bauernhaus in
Viechtach.*

11
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08

DISKURS *Zweimal Venedig:
Experimental Strategies.
Architekturdämmerung?*

KOMMENTAR: DER BÜRGER STIMMT AB

Innerhalb weniger Monate konnten die Berliner über zwei große städtebauliche Projekte abstimmen: die Zukunft des Flughafens Tempelhof und die »Mediaspree«. Volksabstimmungen zu Städtebau und Architektur kommen in Mode. Aber bringen sie uns weiter? ► weiter auf Seite 3



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TOWARDS AN AD HOC ARCHITECTURE: EXPERIMENTAL STRATEGIES IN VENICE

{ Futuristische Urhütten

Der italienische Pavillon der Architekturbiennale widmet sich der Neudefinition von Architektur. Wie primitive Hütten muten denn auch die Beiträge an: erste Versuche, wie und wo Menschen sich in unserer unübersichtlichen Welt zu Hause fühlen können. Einmal ging es um Recycling und Flexibilität: Eine zentral aufgestellte Konstruktion mit gemeinsam genutzter Infrastruktur wie Küche und Bad kommt von der TU Wien, Takuya Onishi schlägt Notunterkünfte aus Verpackungsmaterialien vor, LOT-EK recyceln Schiffscontainer und übrig gebliebene Orte.

Andere setzen auf bewachsene Häuser, so Stefano Boeri, CoLoCo und ma0. Die »richtigen« Landschaftsarchitekten, wie Field Operations (siehe db 9/08, Seite 30), Feld 72 und Topotek zeigen, wie viel mehr Kreativität als bei den Architekten es zur Zeit in ihrer Branche gibt. Dieser Glaube an die Wirksamkeit des bloßen Pflanzens von Blumen, Gras und Bäumen hat mitunter etwas Utopisches, und Cloud9 und Jakob & MacFarlane schlagen organisch gewachsene Häuser vor, die von vornherein Teil des Ökosystems wären. Natürlich gibt es auch Beiträge, die sich auf soziale Aspekte konzentrieren. Zum Beispiel verwenden Elemental einfache Betonfertigteile, Wellblech und recycelte Industriematerialien, um flexible Sozialwohnungen zu bauen, die sich dem Leben der Bewohner besser anpassen. Aus all diesen Vorgehensweisen und Elementen könnte man einen veritablen Baukasten zusammenstellen und daraus temporäre, wiederverwend- und sofort errichtbare Architektur produzieren - mit minimalem Energieverbrauch und höherer Anpassungsfähigkeit. Wie diese Ideen ihre Form bekommen können, zeigen die Beiträge von Interbreeding Field mit Brücken aus Plastikflaschen, von Ball-Nogues Studio mit Höhlen aus Schnüren und von MAP Office, die die in China entstehenden hybriden Räume untersuchten.

~dr

Reuse, rethink and re-imagine: that was the message of the survey of experimental architecture presented in the Italian Pavilion at the 11th International Architecture Biennale Venice this fall. In this panorama of the work of fifty-five architecture and design firms, assembled under the direction of Emiliano Gandolfi, our curatorial team wanted to show strategies and tactics that point towards the vital role architecture can have in working on the central social, economic and ecological problems that confront our society. We did not present solutions, as some critics have asked for and continue to demand, because we do not think that architecture alone can provide full answers to these problems. We also believe that the history of the 20th and 21st century shows that, whenever architects pretend to have solutions, they usually only exacerbate the problem. Instead, we sought to show visions of what our world might be like in scenarios which we could enact; elements and buildings block out of which one could erect more open, environmentally saner and more affordable buildings; experiments in form, material and image that might break open the restrictive and restricting roles buildings have in our society; and mechanisms that were not buildings, but could be the armature for a future architecture.

Much of this work had a strong focus on environmental issues. This was natural, given the fact that the devastation of our planet is and must be one of the central issues confronting us. Buildings produce over 40 percent of the waste in the European Communities, and use about half its energy, and it seems absurd that we continue to throw away building materials and send unused warmth wafting into the air.

In a concrete sense, an ecological focus means first of all architects must forgo their desire to create solid, static monuments built for the ages. What we need are flexible, reusable buildings that can reinvigorate our cities and provide more flexible structures of inhabitation. Fattinger, Orso and Rieper, in collaboration with students of the TU in Vienna, showed how this could be done with the Add On Tower, a scaffold erected in a public square and filled with all the amenities of public life, from a place to cook together to a place to bathe together. Takuya Onishi (1) proposed using FedEx packaging and other cast-off materials to create temporary housing during emergencies, while LOT-EK extended their experiments with the reuse of shipping containers and airplane parts to other cast-off industrial materials and sites such as highway underpasses. Both 2012 and Millegomme focused purely on the reuse of materials, whether washing machines in the former case or truck tires in the latter.

Other architects denied autonomous, energy-wasting and static building practices with grass.



Stefano Boeri, CoLoCo and ma0 Emmezero suggested that we could cover our buildings with nature to create vertical gardens or new parks within our cities. The design and use of such parks was the province of firms such as Field Operations, Feld 72 and Topotek, who showed that there is currently much more creativity in the world of landscape architecture than there is in the fields of architecture or urban design. Such a belief in just planting flowers, grass and trees took a utopian turn in the work of firms such as Avatar and EcologicStudio. Cloud9 and Jakob & MacFarlane (2) suggested that we could grow buildings organically, so that they would by their very nature be part of the ecosystem.

If one sums up all the different tactics and building elements these and other architects in the exhibition proposed, one could get a veritable kit-of-parts out of which one could erect a new kind of architecture whose principles would be re-use, ad-hoc and temporary constructions that use as little energy as possible and are more open and adaptable than standard forms. The implications are utopian, with a strong sense that a perfect world would be one in which we would understand that there is a deep structure common to both human artifice and the natural world that must be researched, understood and elaborated into form. The overall result would be forms that would be unfinished and somewhat shambolic in appearance.

This kind of ad hoc aesthetic also came through clearly in the work of those practices that concentrated on social rather than on purely environmental issues. Both Silver Lion for Best Young Architect winner Elemental (3) and American architect Teddy Cruz, to cite two examples, proposed using the simplest elements of building, such as concrete blocks and corrugated metal, as well as recycled industrial materials, to create elaborations of standard and reductive social housing blocks in such a way that they could be more adaptable to and reflective of the lives that take place inside of them.

What all of this work lacked was a sense of formal coherence. They were, in other words, difficult to recognize as architecture in the traditional sense as the production of coherent and autonomous buildings. This in itself was a message to both architects and to the general public. Though we might desire the solace of forms and their sense of completion, we must find other ways in which architecture can make us feel at home in an increasingly confusing and quickly changing world. We must find strategies through which the framing devices of architecture can help us figure out where we are, can mediate between our bodies and the world, and can enclose a slow space within a fast world. We must do so, however, without creating monuments. The technique of reuse, the

thinking in terms of organic structures, and the vision of open and reusable forms must come together with an ad hoc working method, an aesthetic of collage and a strategy of removal, elision and abstraction for such work to make sense in our modern world.

It was the research into how we might be able to create such forms, and the elaboration of scenarios populated by such forms, that formed an undercurrent of recognizable, but strangely altered, forms throughout the Italian Pavilion. Fed by the examples of six Masters of the Experiment, including Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Coop Himmelb(l)au, Morphosis, Herzog & de Meuron and OMA, a variety of architects showed how we could re-imagine our world in a concrete manner. Picking of simple sticks and plastic water jugs, Interbreeding Field erected elegant bridges and pavilions, while Ball-Nogues Studio (4) made a translucent cave out of nothing more than strings. Aether used even more humble materials, including plastic toys and car mirrors. While Ben Nicholson showed his research into mazes and MAP Office speculated on the ways in which the new hybrid spaces of China (5) could give birth to form, Wellington Reiter, Lebbeus Woods and Wes Jones each spun out cinematic visions of what our world could like in the future. None of these were recipes or predictions, but rather proposals or projections: concrete ideas in perspective or form that might give some form of coherence to the technologically and socially based experiments that surrounded these speculations.

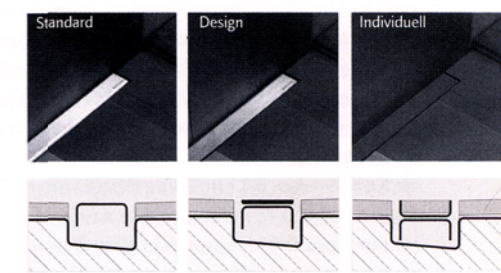
How all of this might finally come together was a question we as a curatorial team tried to answer in the Arsénale, where twenty architects created site-specific installations that tried to address the question of how we might reveal, appropriate and domesticate those systems, mainly of technological nature, that control our daily lives, and do so in such a manner that we could feel at home in the modern world. The result was a parade of impractical, fragmented and visionary projects. Again, none of them provided answers and none of them offered anything approaching solutions. But all of them together were like the primitive huts that I can imagine being strewn around the landscape of our postmodern, post-capitalist, post-urban and post-technocratic society. It is up to all of us to turn such notions of sane shelter into the body of a new architecture.

~Aaron Betsky

{ Aaron Betsky ist Kurator der diesjährigen Architekturbiennale in Venedig und Direktor des Cincinnati Art Museum. Bis 2006 leitete er das NAI, davor war er Kurator für Architektur, Design und Digital Projects am San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

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