Fundamentals

Central Pavilion
Elements of Architecture

National Pavilions
1914–2014
Absorbing Modernity

Arsenale
Monditalia
Architecture, not architects...

An umbrella theme for the national pavilions: from national to universal...

The Arsenale as performance space...
A new kind of Venice Architecture Biennale...

The 2014 Venice Architecture Biennale – called *Fundamentals* – will consist of three main components:

**Elements of Architecture** – a research-based exhibition in the *Central Pavilion* exploring the often overlooked but universally familiar elements of architecture: the floor, the door, the wall, the ceiling, the toilet...

**Absorbing Modernity** – the *national pavilions* of the Giardini and elsewhere will share a single theme: stories of their national architectural from 1914 till 2014. To enhance the coherence between the national presentations, for the first time, there is an invitation to the pavilions to communicate with the director about the theme.

**Monditalia** – providing the staging in the *Arsenale* for the first collaboration between the Architecture and Dance, Theatre, Music Biennials and the Film Festival.

Together, these exhibitions and events perform an “audit” of architecture, asking: What do we have? How did we get here? What are our possibilities, and where do we go from here?

Rem Koolhaas
May 2014
Central Pavilion

Elements of Architecture

Elements of Architecture: What buildings are (still) made of
Exhibition of work in progress by Harvard GSD students, Rotterdam, November 2012.
A window is not a window is not a window any more.
– after Gertrude Stein

From the Renaissance onwards, the discourse on architecture was largely based on the definition and analysis of architectural elements. Alberti’s six elements (locality, area, compartment, wall, roof, and opening; 1452), Gottfried Semper’s four elements (hearth, roof, enclosure, mound; 1851) and Le Corbusier’s Five Points of Architecture (pilotis, free facade, open plan, long window, roof garden; 1928) were all, in varying degrees, efforts to analyse the history of buildings. But since the globalization of modern architecture in the second half of the 20th century, the possibility of an elemental systematization of architecture has been largely ignored.

“Elements of Architecture” in the Central Pavilion will be an attempt to trace the history of architecture’s universally recognizable – though infinitely varied – basic elements. Each room will be devoted to an individual component (stair, door, window, floor, corridor etc.).

Elements that used to be the speciality of architects – the ceiling and the window, but also even the façade – have become devices and ceded to more advanced technological domains. But despite the attempts of parametric architecture to merge formerly distinct categories like roof, wall, and window into a continuous architectural surface, the fundamental elements of architecture endure, albeit in sometimes radically different forms…

By looking at the evolution of architectural elements that are common to all cultures, fundamentals will avoid the Eurocentrism that still characterises architectural discourse.
Central Pavilion Elements of Architecture

Test for exhibition-as-hanging-book.
Rotterdam December, 2012
Central Pavilion Elements of Architecture

The door in treatises: revealing the significance and architectural variations of the door across eras and regions...

Staircase in Oscar Niemeyer’s Itamaray Palace, Brasilia, 1970... updated to current standards.

International staircase guidelines.

“Absorbing Modernity” is an attempt to mobilize the individual histories of the nations represented at the biennale to create an overview of how, since 1914, the national characteristics of each country’s architecture have seemingly evolved into a single, global aesthetic.

Under the influence of wars, diverse political systems, different states of development, national and international architectural movements, various educational philosophies, individual architectural talents, networks, and technological developments, architectures that 100 years ago were identifiably “French” or “Indian” or “Chinese” have become seemingly interchangeable. National identity has been sacrificed to modernity.

Each nation will, in its own way, illustrate how their country’s architecture absorbed modernity over the last 100 years. Is it still meaningful to talk about a Belgian architecture, a Swiss architecture, a Brazilian architecture...? The architecture of the pavilions themselves could play a crucial role in each exhibition.
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I beheld it marvellously dark.

Boils in the winter the tenacious pitch
To smear their unsound vessels o’er again,

Sail they cannot; and instead thereof
One makes his vessel new, and one recaulks
The ribs of that which many a voyage has made;

One hammers at the prow, one at the stern,
This one makes ears, and that one cordage twists,
Another mends the mainsail and the mizzen

...I beheld it marvellously dark.

As in the Arsenal of the Venetians
Boils in the winter the tenacious pitch
To smear their unsound vessels o’er again,

For sail they cannot; and instead thereof
One makes his vessel new, and one recaulks
The ribs of that which many a voyage has made;

One hammers at the prow, one at the stern,
This one makes ears, and that one cordage twists,
Another mends the mainsail and the mizzen

Dante, *The Inferno*, Canto xxi
The Consequences of Love, Paolo Sorentino

Marco Paolini

On the Concept of the Face: Regarding the Son of God, Romeo Castelucci

Set design by Dante Ferretti

Parsifal, Romeo Castelucci

Lagos Buamdis, Angels, Rimini P. I.

On the Concept of the Face: Regarding the Son of God, Romeo Castelucci

Set design by Dante Ferretti

Vita Mia, Emma Dante

Roberto Saviano

The Divine Comedy, Societas Raffaello Sanzio

Marco Podini

Paradis, Romeo Castelucci

Zhan Wang, Urban Landscapes

The Consequences of Love, Paolo Sorentino

Sergio Sozzi, Romeo Castelucci

Wunderkammer Forte, Ricci Forte

Sergio Sozzi, Romeo Castelucci

Arsenale

Spoglitalia

Inspirations for a theatrical colonization of the Arsenale...

Arsenale

Monditalia

Il Divo, Paolo Sorentino

Sergio Sozzi and Pasolini

Cinecitta, Rome

Sergio Sozzi, Romeo Castelucci

Cinecitta

Roberto Saviano

The Divine Comedy, Societas Raffaello Sanzio

#Olivo, Paolo Sorentino

Cinecitta

Arsenale

Zhan Wang, Urban Landscapes

The Consequences of Love, Paolo Sorentino

Sergio Sozzi and Pasolini
Biennale as urban site

It would be interesting to look at further development potential for the two biennale sites...