Brod / The Ship / La Nave; 
A floating pavilion for Croatia 
at the Venice Biennale 

Commissioner: 
Leo Modrčin 

Architects: 
Saša Begović 
Marko Dabrović 
Igor Franić 
Tanja Grozdanić 
Petro Mišković 
Silvio Novak 
Velko Olujić 
Helema Paver Njirić 
Lea Plevan 
Toma Plejić 
Goran Rako 
Saša Randić 
Idis Turato 
Pero Vuković 
Tonči Žarnić 

Summer, 2010
LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA 2010
12. Mostra Internazionale di Architettura / 12th International Architecture Exhibition / 12. međunarodna izložba arhitekture

MOSTRA / EXHIBITION / IZLOŽBA:
"People meet in Architecture"
Kazuyo Sejima, direttrice artistica
29 agosto – 21 novembre 2010
Kazuyo Sejima, Artistic Director
August 29 – November 21 2010
Kazuyo Sejima, umjetnička direktorica

ESPOSIZIONE CROATA / CROATIAN PAVILION / HRVATSKI PAVILJON

TITOTO DEL PROGETTO / PROJECT TITLE / NAZIV PROJEKTA:
La nave / The Ship / Brod:
Un Padiglione galleggiante per la Croazia alla Biennale di Venezia
/ A floating pavilion for Croatia at the Venice Biennale
Flovčći hrvatski paviljon za Venecijanski bijenale

Progetto del Ministero della Cultura,
Repubblica di Croazia
Božo Biškupić, Ministro della Cultura
/ A project of the Ministry of Culture,
Republic of Croatia
Božo Biškupić, Minister of Culture
/ Projekt Ministarstva kulture,
Republika Hrvatska
Božo Biškupić, ministar kulture

COMMISSARIO / COMMISSIONER / POVJERENIK:
Leo Modrčin

ARCHITETTI PARTECIPANTI / PARTICIPATING ARCHITECTS / ARHITETTI SUĐIONICI:

ORGANIZZATORE / ORGANIZER / ORGANIZATOR:
Museo dell’arte moderna e contemporanea, Trieste / Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rijeka / Muzej moderne i suvremene umjetnosti u Rijeci

www.pavilion.hr
A group of leading Croatian architects, responsible for the strong presence of Croatian architecture on the international scene in recent years, has accepted a task to design a floating exhibition structure to present Croatian art and architecture at the Venice Biennale. Towed across the Adriatic Sea, the structure is based on an existing barge with approximate dimensions of 10 x 20 x 3 meters.

For Croatia, a floating pavilion seems to be an obvious solution. Since 1991, the year of Croatia’s independence and the dissolution of Yugoslavia, a permanent pavilion at the Giardini is no longer an option. As the closest maritime neighbor of Venice, a land of seamen and shipbuilders, Croatia is well positioned to establish a direct link with the city across the bay. A floating pavilion could be interpreted as a straightforward answer to a very simple issue of having an own exhibition venue and bringing cultural assets to the water-locked island city.

Yet, both of these concerns might be challenged as irrelevant. A pavilion as a space container for presenting art and architecture in the times of land and performance art, site-specific installations, web art, holographic and cinematic ultra-realistic simulations of what are to be built works of architecture might not be a relevant medium for communicating and sharing cultural assets, while the transport of these non-material artifacts frequently turns into a pushing of the send button.

For this year’s Croatian participation, we are transforming these and many other issues into an architectural proposition. We have secured an existing barge with the floor area of 200m2 and visited the shipyard in Kraljevica, still in continuous activity after 280 years; we have consulted with maritime specialists and naval architects and have met in more than 15 formal work sessions and innumerable other meetings and conversations to design the pavilion. We went back to the shipyard to have the pavilion built, and have arranged for the tow ship to bring the vessel to Venice. We have worked with the authorities in Venice to enable us to anchor it there.

The project did not start that way. The floating pavilion was presented as a conceptual proposition, an assignment for a group of architects working in different formats of architectural practice, some more concentrated on the academic path, while others focused more on building some of the most important projects of the recent Croatian architectural renaissance. At this point of a building slow-down, they accepted a challenge to participate in a symposium of ideas, a programmatic assignment preparation for the “real” pavilion project to be built when the good times return.

But two main departures from the initial concepts occurred and were indeed dramatic. The first was in the architects’ decision to forgo the suggested format where they were asked to offer their own, speculative proposals for the pavilion on the barge. These proposals would have been exhibited in the Croatian space at the Biennale as a classic exhibition of projects with no bells and whistles, just architects with their straightforward projects.

My colleagues immediately jumped on the implicit paradox
L E O  M O D R Č I N :  P. 15—INTRODUCTION

In the course of the team’s work, several other interesting shifts happened. For the architects focused more on the academic and theoretical approach to architecture, the palpability of the real, constructed artifact and the event of its towing to Venice became an irresistible motivation. For those batters by the decade of the unprecedented building boom in Croatia, the search for something with even the theoretical foundation of the presentation at the space of the Arsenale, and the musings mistaken for water jets and the whole design took the final form. A moment in which a model was interpreted in a wrong way, a mesh mistaken for water jets and the whole design took the final turn. And then there was the point in which the inevitable constrains of time and money took over, but the construction of the pavilion structure energized even the worse of skeptics among the group. All this creative drama is not that important after all, even though it might be interesting to some researchers in the future when the archives are opened.

The hesitant project management approach by the commissioner, who might have been a wrong person for the task (and was told so by the team from the get go), and who never even imagined that he would be assisting the real construction of a floating pavilion destined for Venice, resulted in a self-organizing process of work in which the three aspects of the project – the barge structure itself, its presentation at the space of the Arsenale, and the project publication are all synchronized around the common theme. No, not the vessel. This meant that even the project title was wrong: this is not a ship, they said, its all about the cargo it carries. The structure on the barge that would deliver the cargo of art and architecture to Venice now. The second major premise i.e. the collection of projects as a cumulative expression of what the pavilion might be was simply rejected too. Instead, they decided to work together, as a team and on a single project to be realized. The two initial premises of the project were simply rejected as wrong.

Leo Modrčin: Proven Wrong
Igor Franić was born in Zagreb 1963. He graduated from the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb. After the graduation he worked in London. He runs an independent architectural practice in Zagreb and since 2002 he has been working as Associate Professor at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb.

He received an award for his competition project of the Pharmaceutical and Biochemical Faculty at the 35th Zagreb Salon 2002. His major built projects are: Kindergarten in Ston (1995), Museum of Commerce and industrial building, residential and commercial building, Zagreb (2007). His major unbuilt projects are: competition project for a sports complex with a swimming pool, Pula, 2nd prize (2003), Plea, Dubrovnik competition, lst prize (2003), competition project for the Music Academy in Zagreb, 2nd prize (2004).

His most important participations at exhibitions are: Magazzini del sale, MCA, Venice, IT (2007), Croatian Contemporary Architecture, Turin, IT (2008), New Trajectories: Contemporary Architecture in Croatia and Slovenia, Harvard University, USA (2008). He has held a series of lectures on his work.

Tanja Grozdanic was born 1968 in Zagreb, Croatia. She graduated from the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb. She was a guest critic at different EU universities and workshops and a member of several national architectural juries.

She is a founding partner and Principal Architect of 3LHD Architects. 3LHD is an architectural practice focused on integration of various disciplines – architecture, urban planning, design, and art. Projects, such as the Croatian Defenders’ Memorial Bridge in Rijeka, Bale Sports Hall, the Croatian pavilion at EXPO 2005 in Japan, Split waterfront, and Zamet Centre in Rijeka are some of the highlights of the practice.

The work of 3LHD has been presented at important universities, exhibitions, and institutions all over the world. It received important Croatian and international awards, including the WAFF 2008 Award at the First World Architecture Festival, IOC/IAKS Award, AR Emerging Architecture Award, ID Magazine Award and all most important Croatian professional awards: Drago Galić, Viktor Kovačić, Bernardo Bernardi, and Vladimir Nazor Awards.

Marko Dabarović was born 1969 in Dubrovnik, Croatia. He is a member of the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb. In 1991 he founded the MWA Computer Visualization Studio. Since 2002 he has been a member of the CAA Professional Council, since 2003 a member of UMMA, and since 2005 a member of the European Architecture National Committee. He is also a licensing expert of the Croatian Football Association in the UEFA. He is a found and Partner and Principal Architect of 3LHD Architects. 3LHD is an architectural practice focused on integration of various disciplines – architecture, urban planning, design, and art. Projects, such as the Croatian Defenders’ Memorial Bridge in Rijeka, Bale Sports Hall, the Croatian pavilion at EXPO 2005 in Japan, Split waterfront, and Zamet Centre in Rijeka are some of the highlights of the practice.

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Lila Modrićin is an architect working in Rijeka, Croatia and New York, USA. He is the architect of the acclaimed 59E59 Theaters building in New York City, which was recently awarded the Architectural Review Building of the Year Award 2008.

He graduated from the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb in 1984 and obtained a Master’s Degree at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York in 1988. He also held a faculty position at the same Institute as well as at the University of Zagreb. Since 2002 he has been teaching at the School of Architecture, SUNY, at Buffalo in 2006. In 2008 he became Adjunct Professor at the Faculty of Architecture in Zagreb. His work was recognized in a number of architectural competitions, including the first prize at the 11th Membrane Design Competition in Japan in 1996, the second prize for the Public Library in Rijeka in 2006 etc.

His projects and essays on architecture have been published in numerous architectural publications.

Silvije Novak was born in 1971 in Rijeka, Croatia. He graduated from the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb, where he now works as guest lecturer. He obtained his Master of Architecture degree at the KTH Stockholm and TU Berlin from 2001 to 2003 and at the University of Camerino

**Lea Pelivan**

was born in Split in 1976. She graduated from the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb in 1999. In 2003 she founded STUDIO UP with Toma Plejić — a Zagreb-based architectural practice focused on contemporary architecture and city-planning. She was awarded the Grand Prix at the 38th Zagreb Salon 2003, and received the Viktor Kovačić Award (2000, 2002), and Drago Galić (2009) Awards. She also received a Special Mention of the Mies Van der Rohe Award for Emerging Architects in 2009. She participated at the exhibitions Mare Nostrum and Power Lounge, which were part of the second and the third editions of the International Architecture Biennale in Rotterdam, Balkanology in Basel, Peacebuilding in Rome, and New Trajectories: Contemporary Architecture in Croatia and Slovenia at Harvard University. In 2004 she represented Croatia at the 10th International Architecture Biennale, Kalkanology in Basel, Peacebuilding in Rome, and New Trajectories: Contemporary Architecture in Croatia and Slovenia at Harvard University. In 2004 she represented Croatia at the Venice Biennale 1 and 2. For his architectural office. Together with Ida Turato, he founded Randić-Turato Architects in 1993. They received the Viktor Kovačić Award for the extension of the Technical Faculty in Rijeka in 2004, for the Pope John Paul II Hall in 2008 and for the DKVF kindergarten in 2009. The elementary School in Krk received the Piranesi Award in 2005 and the Croatian State prize Vladimir Nazor in 2006. The same building was included in the selection of the 2007 Mies van der Rohe Award. In 2006 they represented Croatia at the 10th International Architecture Exhibition at the Venice Biennale.

**Goran Rako**

was born in Imotski 1952. In 1977 he participated at the competition for the Museum in Jablanica (with M. Pecotić). In 1978 he graduated from the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb in 1980. In 1978 he founded Randić-Turato Architects in 1993. They received the Viktor Kovačić Award for the extension of the Technical Faculty in Rijeka in 2004, for the Pope John Paul II Hall in 2008 and for the DKVF kindergarten in 2009. The elementary School in Krk received the Piranesi Award in 2005 and the Croatian State prize Vladimir Nazor in 2006. The same building was included in the selection of the 2007 Mies van der Rohe Award. In 2006 they represented Croatia at the 10th International Architecture Exhibition at the Venice Biennale.

**Pero Vuković**

born 1989, is a student Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb since 2007. He has attended different architectural and art workshops. He received the Chancellor’s Award for 2010. He participated at architectural exhibitions and competitions and received several prizes, two of which were first prizes. At the Faculty of Architecture he participated in the courses Design Studies 1 and 2 and Architectural Design 1 and 2, in the capacity of Teaching Assistant.

**Tonči Žarnić**

was born 1956. He graduated from the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb in 1979. He has been working at the Faculty of Architecture in Zagreb since 1980, since 2010 as Full Professor. 

He is the author or a co-author of a series of architectural designs (reaching from initial sketches to execution projects) and built projects. He won a number of prizes at architectural competitions and awards, e.g. at the Youth Salon (special mention 1987, with Tonči Žarnić and Zagreb Salon (project award and the Grand Prix of the Salon 1991). They received the Viktor Kovačić Award for the best built project in 2005 (with T. Žarnić); second prize at the 41st Zagreb Salon 2006 (with T. Žarnić). He participated at many exhibitions in Croatia and abroad. His selected built projects are: Industrial and Crafts School in Zadar (with T. Žarnić), Pavilion 6 of the Faculty of Agronomy in Zagreb (with N. Auf-Frančić) and a family house in Kustošija.

**Toma Plejić**

was born in Rijeka 1977. He graduated from the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb in 2001. In 2003 he founded STUDIO UP with Lea Pelivan — a Zagreb-based architectural practice focused on contemporary architecture and city-planning. He was awarded the Grand Prix at the 38th Zagreb Salon 2003, and received the Viktor Kovačić Award (2000, 2002), and Drago Galić (2009) Awards. He also received a Special Mention of the Mies Van der Rohe Award for Emerging Architects in 2009. He participated at the exhibitions Mare Nostrum and Power Lounge, which were part of the second and the third editions of the International Architecture Biennale in Rotterdam, Balkanology in Basel, Peacebuilding in Rome, and New Trajectories: Contemporary Architecture in Croatia and Slovenia at Harvard University. In 2004 she represented Croatia at the Venice Biennale 1 and 2. For his architectural office. Together with Ida Turato, he founded Randić-Turato Architects in 1993. They received the Viktor Kovačić Award for the extension of the Technical Faculty in Rijeka in 2004, for the Pope John Paul II Hall in 2008 and for the DKVF kindergarten in 2009. The elementary School in Krk received the Piranesi Award in 2005 and the Croatian State prize Vladimir Nazor in 2006. The same building was included in the selection of the 2007 Mies van der Rohe Award. In 2006 they represented Croatia at the 10th International Architecture Exhibition at the Venice Biennale.

**Velojk Goluč**

was born in Bjelovar 1954. He graduated from the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb in 1979. He has been working at the Faculty of Architecture in Zagreb since 1980, since 2010 as Full Professor. He is the author or a co-author of a series of architectural designs (reaching from initial sketches to execution projects) and built projects. He won a number of prizes at architectural competitions and awards, e.g. at the Youth Salon (special mention 1987, with...
Cluster of Complex Relations

Fifteen authors (+commissioner) seeking a solution

Cluster A
- S.B.
- S.N.
- T.G.
- M.D.

Cluster B
- S.R.
- L.P.
- T.F.
- V.O.

Cluster C
- S.R.
- I.T.

Cluster D
- L.P.
- T.F.
- V.O.
- T.Z.

Cluster E
- S.N.
- M.D.

Cluster F
- G.R.
- H.P.

Cluster G
- S.R.
- I.F.

Cluster H
- S.R.
- I.F.

Cluster I
- S.R.
- I.F.

Cluster T
- S.B.
- M.D.
- S.N.
- T.G.
- L.P.
- T.F.
- V.O.
- T.Z.
- G.R.
- H.P.

Diagnosis #1

Cluster A
- 3LHD
- Saša Begović
- Marko Dabrović
- Tanja Grozdanić
- Silvije Novak

Cluster B
- Randić-Turato
- Saša Randić
- Idis Turato

Cluster C
- studioUP
- Lea Pelivan
- Toma Plejić

Cluster D
- oluić-žarnić
- Veljko Glujić
- Tonči Žarnić

Cluster E
- Petra Mišković

Cluster F
- Helena Paver Njirić

Cluster G
- Goran Rako

Cluster H
- Igor Franić

Cluster I
- Pero Vuković

Cluster T
- Saša Begović
- Marko Dabrović
- Igor Franić
- Tanja Grozdanić
- Petra Mišković
- Silvije Novak
- Veljko Glujić
- Helena Paver Njirić
- Lea Pelivan
- Toma Plejić
- Goran Rako
- Saša Randić
- Idis Turato
- Pero Vuković

*S left the cluster on July 25th, 2010
** joined the cluster on July 26th, 2010
A concept: transformer
B concept: cage
C concept: room
D concept: cargo/load

C1 “water garden” room
C2 “water yard” room
C3 enigma room
D1 wood
D2 earth
D3 waste
D4 welded wire mesh
**Diagram #4**

**Sail Away**

Wandering from mooring to mooring and back

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**Zoom #1 Venice**

Mooring possibilities:

1. Punta della Dogana di Mare
2. Giardini della Biennale
3. Arsenale di Venezia

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**Zoom #2 Rijeka**

Mooring possibilities:

1. Pećine Sušak
2. Delta Rijeka-Sušak
3. Luka - skladišta, lukobran
4. Petrolejska luka - INA mazut

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Map showing mooring points in Venice and Rijeka with coordinates for each location.
BUDGET BALLAST

**available funding**

B1) 124,000 € + 40,000 €
- exhibition/Arsenale (+)
- barge/pavilion (-)
- mooring/Venice (-)

B2) 124,000 € + 40,000 € + 5,000 €
- exhibition/Arsenale (-)
- barge/pavilion (+)
- mooring/Venice (4 months) (+)

B3) 220,000 € + 40,000 € + 5,000 €
- exhibition/Arsenale (+)
- barge/pavilion (+)
- mooring/Venice (4 months) (+)

B4) 130,000 € + 40,000 € + 5,000 €
- exhibition/Arsenale (+)
- barge/pavilion (+)
- mooring/Venice (1 day) (+)

B1) First budget distribution
- the organizer’s and the commissioner’s version

B2) Second budget distribution
- authors’ version

B3) Third budget distribution
- ideal version

B4) Fourth budget distribution
- ongoing version (about Aug. 1st, 2010; status of the Venice mooring - unknown)

*from the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia
**donated by the City of Rijeka
Mooring?

One barge
Several concepts
Ca. 900 hours
More than 20 meetings
1 commissioner, 1 resigned, 1 joined in
16 architects, 15:1
Zagreb—Rijeka—Kraljevica—Venice

Four months later, the time ran out... At the moment of conclusion of this document we do not know if the pavilion—container for further content or is it a content in itself?

There were different dilemmas. One remained unsolved until the very end: is the Pavilion a container for further content or is it a content in itself?

Some wanted to define the concept as soon as possible, in order to leave enough time for its elaboration. The others kept questioning each set concept. Still, the idea of mooring in Venice was unanimous. Four months later, the time ran out... At the moment of conclusion of this document we do not know if the pavilion—container for further content or is it a content in itself?

For months, meetings have begun and ended with the same subject: “How do we moor at the Biennale?” In spite of all efforts and time that we had “in abundance”, the status of mooring has remained unknown.

To be continued.
Meeting #5

From: Leo Modrcin
To: Rosolen Roberto
Cc: Micol Salen
Sent: Friday, May 07, 2010 6:01 PM
Subject: 12th International Architecture Exhibition
   - Barcone di Croazia

Dear Mr. Rosolen,

Sorry for being so persistent in asking about bringing the barcone to Venice. I am now under lot of time pressure, just like you are I am sure, to define the parameters of our project and my "team" is truly anxious about the details so that we can continue with the project. I would kindly ask you to give us an update with your estimations on possible decision schedule. To that regard we would be very happy to meet you in person this coming Tuesday, 11 May, in Venice, together with Idis Turato, an architect in our group. We could also use this occasion to find about other issues of this scenario with other relevant agencies that are outside of your organization.

I again appreciate very much your help with this, best regards from all,
Leo

Meeting #6

From: Leo Modrcin
To: Rosolen Roberto
Cc: Micol Salen
Sent: Tuesday, May 18, 2010 2:11 PM
Subject: Status, barge, meeting

Sorry for not sending minutes of our last meeting earlier. At the meeting instead of giving up on the barge going to Venice, we found out that we could get answers from the Biennale organizer with the help of Natasa Radovic, a Venice based event and arts organizer. I immediately named her as my on site assistant, notified the Biennale about that decision and asked Natasa to send a proposal for services. We also determined possible mooring sites based on her experience.

Greetings,
Leo

Meeting #7

From: Leo Modrcin
To: Veljko Oulic; Tonci Zarnic; Sasa Randic; 3LHD; Petar Miskovic; StudioUP; Igor Franic; Idis Turato; Helena Paver Njiric; Goran Rako
Cc: Njiric; Goran Rako; M.D.
Sent: Wednesday, May 19, 2010 9:30 AM
Subject: barge

I visited the 3rd of May shipyard and spoke to the sales director who showed me the barge. First I did not think so but this indeed is the one 3LHD used for the bridge. It is excellent, exactly what we need, see the attached pictures and plans. The shipyard will send us a rental proposal. The barge is available in the period we need. After a respond on the mooring site in Venice, the main component remains to be the towing. We still count on Jadranski pomorski as they do not have a response from Venice, this seems to be an important step forward as we eliminate the need to alter the previous barge. This one is ready for the journey.

Thanks,
Leo

Meeting #8

Subject: - The "Room" concept
   - Elaboration: "Water Garden" room, "Water Yard" room, "Enigma" room,
   - The solution depends on the budget
   - We have a budget for the execution of the pavilion if we can get the money allocated for the lease and realization of the exhibition at the Arsenale

I find interesting that everything build in Venice corresponds with water very little, the typology of these structures is to a very small extent based on the fact that they are not built on solid ground...
Dear Ms. Sejima, firstly congratulations on the most deserved Pritzker.

I am writing as a commissioner of the Croatian participation at the "People meet in architecture" exhibition, to describe the project and to kindly ask for your support.

I have proposed a project to design a floating pavilion to showcase Croatian architecture and art in Venice and have assembled a team of 8 most notable architectural practices to work on the project. We have located an actual barge with approximate dimensions of 10x20x3 m and have gotten a firm commitment by the shipping services company to provide the barge and to have it towed away to Venice. What started as a conceptual project to explore the possibilities and use that as a vessel to showcase Croatian architecture and art in Venice, became a true project.

We are convinced that to bring the actual structure to Venice would be a strong contribution to the whole exhibition, and that it touches the very premise of your year’s Biennale. For us it presents a logical choice on how to bring things to Venice across the bay, as a neighboring maritime country, in many ways a redefinition of the historical nautical ties between Venice and Croatian coast. It also touches upon the sky, with the sea and the pier, as if the barge would get a call to architects for this year's Biennale. For us it presents a logical choice on how to bring things to Venice across the bay, as a neighboring maritime country, in many ways a redefinition of the historical nautical ties between Venice and Croatian coast. It also touches upon the sky, with the sea and the pier, as if the barge would get a call to architects for this year's Biennale.

I have approached the officials at the Biennale with the request for support to bring the barge to Biennale. For the in progress, your endorsement of the plan to moore the barge in the area of Arsenale would get a special importance and would greatly influence the effort to realize it.

I thank you in advance for your attention to this particular matter.

I remain respectfully yours,
Leo Modrcin, architect
Commissionner, Croatian participation

Subject: For Ms.Sejima / Croatian participation at La Biennale / from the Commissioner

To: Sanaa@sanaa.co.jp
From: Leo Modrcin
Sent: Friday, June 11, 2010 12:27 PM

---MEETING

MEETING #10

MEETING #11

MEETING #12

MEETING #13

MEETING #14

When: June 2nd, 2010
Where: FA, Leo's office

When: June 7th, 2010
Where: FA, Leo's office

When: June 14th, 2010
Where: FA, Petar's office

When: June 28th, 2010
Where: FA, Petar's office

---MEETING

MEETING #9

MEETING #10

MEETING #11

MEETING #12

When: May 25th, 2010
Where: FA, Leo's office
Who: S.B., M.D., I.F., T.G., P.M.

When: May 30th, 2010
Where: FA, Leo's office
Who: S.B., M.D., I.F., T.G., P.M.

When: June 14th, 2010
Where: FA, Petar's office

---MEETING

MEETING #13

MEETING #14

When: May 30th, 2010
Where: FA, Leo's office
Who: S.B., M.D., I.F., T.G., P.M.

When: June 28th, 2010
Where: FA, Petar's office

---MEETING

MEETING #13

MEETING #14

When: June 2nd, 2010
Where: FA, Leo's office

When: June 7th, 2010
Where: FA, Leo's office

When: June 14th, 2010
Where: FA, Petar's office

When: June 28th, 2010
Where: FA, Petar's office

---MEETING

MEETING #11

MEETING #12

When: June 2nd, 2010
Where: FA, Leo's office

When: June 7th, 2010
Where: FA, Leo's office

When: June 14th, 2010
Where: FA, Petar's office

When: June 28th, 2010
Where: FA, Petar's office

---MEETING
Subject: 

- Final bill of quantities
- A book

Highlights:
- With how much cargo can the barge be loaded?
- What is sustainable for the budget?
- The barge can carry 300 tons, but we can hardly buy 30 tons of wire mesh
- The maximal depth at the Giardini mooring location is 60 cm!

Subject: 

- Rationalization of the pavilion
- A book

Highlights:
- With how much cargo can the barge be loaded?
- What is sustainable for the budget?
- The barge can carry 300 tons, but we can hardly buy 30 tons of wire mesh
- The maximal depth at the Giardini mooring location is 60 cm!

Subject: 

- Consulting the expert in regard to the stability of the construction
- The problem of horizontal forces at heavy seas

Highlights:
- Alterations in the geometry of each wire mesh layer
- Space defined by changeable edges

Guest: 

- Evonimir Sabljak, Professor

Subject: 

- Elaboration of the room
- A new diagram: a room with changing wall quality, observation holes

Highlights:
- Introduction of a library, benches / useful elements

Note:
- Rako lost his patience and quarreled with the rest of the team
- He does not want us to simply sail through the canal and leave right away
- We need to think what the activities on the barge would be in these three months so that the project gets the additional story......perhaps an exhibition by our artist friends who would not ask for additional funds.....a concert by some friends.....poetry reading and books by some friends......dance performance by some friends......
**Subject: MEETING: TIME/PLACE**

Since yesterday the barge is moored to the shipyard quay. It is rather high in relation to the quay. Wire mesh arrives today. The wooden sills will come off and the verticals are welded directly to the deck, without grillage. This means that it won’t be possible (or it will be difficult) to take the pavilion off the deck with a crane "in one piece". Welds can be ground down neatly. Today we should start with verticals and the first layers. The verticals will have a 12 mm diameter.

I propose that by the end of the day we check on the timing of the collective arrival, depending on the on-site situation, it seems to me that it would be better to shift the arrival for one or two days. Pack your long trousers, because you cannot enter the shipyard in shorts (or any kind of beach sandals etc.). There is no camera yet, because we are waiting for approval.

Best, petar

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**Subject: Croatian participation/progress**

Greetings, Leo

I am sending to all FYI,

Greetings, Leo
From: petar miskovic
To: Leo Modrcin
Cc: narcisa vukojevic; Goran Rako; pero vukovic; Vukovic
Sent: Sat 14 Aug 2010 16:30:20 GMT+02:00
Subject: today:the roof

we inscribed additional dimension lines on blueprints to make them easier for the construction workers. the number of layers is reduced from 49 to 43

tonci (2g) was in charge of the final pavilion geometry in collaboration with pero (manchester), who drew the blueprints and dimension lines and kept sending them to me (t), so that leo and i could write additional descriptions on them and take them to the shipyard (kr) in sets of five layers, day in, day out

status in the morning: 20/43, more in the afternoon

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From: Leo Modrcin
To: Veljko Oluic; Toni Zaric; Sasa Randic; StudioUP; Igor Franic; Istarsko Nadzorsko Jazine; Paver Njiric; Goran Rako; Pero Vukojevic
Cc: Lana Cavar, narcisa vukojevic
Sent: Sat 14 Aug 2010 16:30:20 GMT+02:00
Subject: today:the roof

status: 43/43
no choosing, as is, holiday special*

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From: veljko olujic
To: Fri 13 Aug 2010 18:16:36 GMT+02:00

We hail the Steel Nebula!

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From: Marko Dabrovic
To: Sat 14 Aug 2010 18:09:43 GMT+02:00

Very good, is it waterproof :)
The series of interviews before you was recorded in July 2010 as a documentary enhancement of the floating Croatian pavilion project for the Venice Biennale. My position in individual conversations with participating architects was that of an outsider; I was not involved in any way and had no direct insight into the collaboration dynamics, joint considerations, and the work within the team. However, some of the external effects of this dynamics did affect me at the very beginning: uneasiness because of the tight deadline, decisions that constantly had to be made between many involved authors, great enthusiasm, and general uncertainty and instability that marked the project on all levels. Instability was often deliberately mentioned in interviews and you will notice that it cropped up in very different contexts - reaching from the physical to static and metaphoric. The concept defined by the commissioner Leo Modrcin seemed to me powerful right away, because it contained neither a monumental Biennale-typical glorification of privileged knowledge, nor marketing rhetoric that packed weak, rather meaningless and uncritical messages into well-sounding phrases. Architects are going to Venice to solve the problem of the exhibition pavilion - so simply, concise, and pragmatically set, but still an extremely powerful gesture. I was also motivated by the chance to clear up my own attitude and feelings towards the project through interviews, because I was surprised by the almost complete turnover of some of its priorities at the moment when the architects, contrary to the Commissioner’s opinion, decided to build a real architectural and art structure this year. It seems to me that this was the reason why the Commissioner tried to revive the discursive and dialogical dimension of the project with these interviews, crucial in the process of the pavilion’s emergence, but partly lost with its execution. In the interviews I tried to trace the architects’ decision to subdue their authorial ego and sign their joint work as a collective, without stressing individual contributions to the design. Thus there is no reference to previous achievements of individual architects or teams, except where the interviewees referred to them in order to shed light on some elements of the work before you. As one of the interviewees said, it is true that in these talks I did not interpret the project directly. Fifteen voices gathered around a single jointly filtered idea is schizophrenic enough, so that my interpretation could be reduced to discreet guiding of the voices and their minimal editing.

Marko Golub was born in Split 1979. He graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb. Today he is a Zagreb-based critic and journalist.
said right away - no, it's a barge! It carries cargo and within this concept we this cargo can be varied every year: different exhibition and presentation concepts, different materials like wood, metal or canvas, its openness or self-containment. Leo primarily demanded that each of us fifteen should make a model of his or her vision of the pavilion on a smaller scale. We did not like this, it seemed absurd to waste time on models instead of showing something that in the end will remain a pavilion. It is possible to bring the barge in every year, equipped with a different context. Its cargo is culture. The culture that Croatia exports to Venice is the barge’s cargo.

HOW USEFUL WAS TO YOU PERSONALLY THE EXPERIENCE OF JOINT WORK WITH AUTHORS FROM OTHER DISCIPLINES, AND TO WHAT EXTENT DOES THIS INTRODUCE NEW MODELS OF PRESENTATION AND DISPLAY AS A CONSEQUENCE? IT SEEMS TO ME THAT WE ARE TALKING ABOUT A DIFFERENT REPRESENTATION MODEL AND LAYOUT NOW. Our experiences with temporary projects (EXPO '05 and '08 and other) are very useful. I think that architectural biennales are becoming increasingly absurd, with all those installations approaching the art zone. At the same time, artists are increasingly, sometimes even in a cleverer way than architects, entering the zone of architecture and space. In this case, the most important circumstance is the fact that you have a pavilion and that you lack exhibition space, but then you bring something that is also part of our maritime tradition. Leo says ship and we say barge, which points to this tradition. This relocated, instable ground is in a certain way also a cultural project, a social project, and a social context. The initial statement has provided us with an impulse, so that from that point onwards the main problem was only the fact that we have a crew of fifteen people, who will find it difficult to work without a real captain. We had beautiful daydreams, a very extensive exchange of ideas and a lot of interaction - maybe everything has been functioning too slow and with too many difficulties - but this maybe showed all the differences between us, which is also very interesting if put in a context.

SOME OF THE OTHER INTERVIEWEES HAVE STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SOCIAL ASPECT OF THIS PROJECT. ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU ARE TO A CONSIDERABLE EXTENT CONCERNED WITH ITS PARA-THEORETICAL ASPECT, I.E. THE NOTIONS OF EASINESS, INSTABILITY, TEMPORARINESS ETC. WHAT IS THE RELATION BETWEEN THESE TWO ASPECTS FROM YOUR POSITION? Everything a house is not, everything a ship is not - that is a pavilion! We have always contemplated theoretical issues when we did temporary things like pavilions or exhibitions. I can illustrate that on the example of the EXPO. Doing the EXPO in Japan, we considered it stupid to place people into a space resembling a cinema theatre, start the screening and say - look, this is Croatia. Why should we do that if today everyone can upload these contents onto the Internet? People keep forgetting that at the EXPO you effectively have only fifteen minutes on disposal. People maybe have just a day for the entire exhibition, so that first you have to draw their attention and then focus on your story. Naturally, in such a case both the concept and the theoretical part are extremely important. We started with the movement of people. We wanted the viewer to move as much as we wanted to encourage him to move with all means we had on disposal - sound, light and scent - and explain him the basic topic. The result was transitory and architectonic, because the content could be experienced from different angles, through movement, and interchange of activity and non-activity. In this case, everything is really entirely unstable again - from the time in which the project is created to its execution and medium. The question is if we shall be there long with the barge or make just a short visit? It is like that with Venice every time - shall we make it, will the costs be approved, will the Ministry transfer the money... The entire context we are in is absolute instability.

DO YOU THINK THAT THE NEGOTIATING PROCESSES AND THE TEDIOUS PAPERWORK ARE ALSO SOME KIND OF THIS PROJECT’S CAPITAL FOR THE FUTURE? Certainly! At the beginning Leo maybe did not even believe us when we told him how persistent he would have to be as a commissioner, if he wanted to push this through. He thought it would be easier just because this is the Biennale and just because we are dealing with the state. Pavilions in Japan and Spain with the state; Helena, Pero, Toma, and I the biennale as well. We had the same kind of experience, and you can’t believe how difficult that is. You must do everything alone and nobody is willing to help. You design alone, organize and transport alone, the catalogues cross the border in your car’s boot, you are the only person who believes in that particular idea. This is a typical situation.

IS THE COLLECTIVE SPIRIT THEN SOMETHING THAT MAKES STRESS-MANAGEMENT EASIER? I’d say yes. For us (3LHD), team work is daily routine. The idea to which we committed ourselves was powerful, it did not come from just one of us. Leo said right at the beginning: I am the commissioner, I shall help you in everything you need and you will realize the project. In this way we create a good common platform. As for the collective, we talked about EXAT 51, New Tendencies, the Zemljica (Earth) group... at some point Leo mentioned a manifesto. One cannot say that the idea of collectivism is unfamiliar to us, because for fifteen years we have been functioning through team work, with suppressed egos; however, manifestos as such are history. To write a manifesto of something like this now would be absurd. For the work we are going to create, the idea and the documentation of the process of collective work are very important. Yesterday Rako summarized some things very well in just one sentence: "We shall agree to meet tomorrow, so that we can decide tomorrow." Postponing is always a topic of collective work and you can imagine how it is when there are fifteen of us. In a collective you must make every decision with everybody and each answer must be positive. It is a result of many brilliant thoughts, but also of strenuous and long negotiations. Communication is our most precious asset.
IN WHAT WAY WAS THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THIS PROJECT IMPORTANT TO YOU? DESPITE THE FINAL PRODUCT, IT IS NOT EASY TO IGNORE THE FACT THAT SHIYARDS, WORKERS AND THE STATE IN THIS BRANCH ARE ALSO PART OF THE STORY ABOUT THE BARGE PAVILION.

We learned what was happening there, but after you see all that, you understand in what poor state the entire thing is. Knowing the situation with shipyards, you begin to understand that people keep working there, that their history is fantastic, but that there are almost no ships there, everything is practically deserted; at the moment they are designing a ship for a rich client, who in the meantime said that this was the last time that he commissioned something in Croatia. Nobody knows what will happen with that place and those people. We considered the collaboration with them in the construction of the pavilion, but we cannot save them in that way. In financial respect is this a minor commission, but it may turn out helpful if it manages to give the people the feeling that they are worth something. We had a very similar issue with the Croatian Defenders’ Bridge in Rijeka, built with the help of the 3. maj shipyard in Rijeka. The social aspect has been treated in a film by Nicole Hewitt; she interviewed the people from the shipyard who had built the bridge, being themselves true Croatian defenders. This was beautiful; we realized that this project deserved to be continued, so that Vlado Knežević contributed his part and Ana Hušman too.

SINCE WE ARE TALKING ABOUT THE PROCESS OF THE EMERGENCE OF THIS PAVILION, CAN WE SAY TO WHAT EXTENT IT REFLECTS THE CURRENT STATE OF ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE IN CROATIA?

Many of you have participated in a massive construction wave with your work, with all the good and bad sides of this phenomenon. However brilliant and successful on the surface everything seemed until recently, because many projects could be built, objectively speaking architecture has always been in the state of instability, not only here, but everywhere in the world. Everywhere the start is ambitious, and then, when policies change, projects simply become obsolete. Architecture is a slow medium, large projects are usually realised through several years of some politician’s term of office. This means that already under this first presupposition they cease to be interesting, because politicians want to erect monuments to themselves and not construct useful buildings. The construction wave three or four years ago presented us all in truly great light. However, we all actually originate from a bad period, especially our older colleagues. Towards the end of Yugoslavia not much was built, during the war not at all – building in Croatia began in 2000 and it lasts until today. There was much insecurity, shifting of completion dates, unbuilt projects, and many great visions that have been stopped. I am speaking about reality and our reality is instability, also metaphorically speaking. The fifteen of us have been working under the circumstances of which we do not know whether they will survive Croatia’s joining the EU. Our Slovenian colleagues tell us that we still have great architecture just because we still have Balkan conditions in which we can negotiate. In this sense is this ten-year flash maybe a little unrealistic picture, but it has really shown many quality things, as a continuation of our very good architectural tradition. It is interesting how in the new context the younger generation, now recognized on the international scene, very successfully found its way. We are persistent in every project, we are very stubborn, maybe even traditional. Even in this case we were very eager to really execute the pavilion. I am not talking just about the instability of this concept and the instability of a pavilion on water, but also about the instability of execution.

YOU MENTIONED YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH A BARGE, ITS PHYSICS AND POSSIBILITIES. TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THIS KNOWLEDGE AND THE EXPERIENCE OF SUCH AN OBJECT HELPED EVERYONE TO FORM SOME INITIAL IDEAS AND TRANSFORM THEM IN THE PROCESS?

Once you do something, maybe just one move, this is already a mastered experience. Once you set a 150-ton object on the water, push it through the entire town of Rijeka, pump the water in and out of the tanks in order to lift or lower it, then you understand that with all accompanying excitement such an action is not comparable to launching a space shuttle. This is just a basic cargo loaded on a barge and transported in a way used in shipyards at least thirty times a day. There has also been the question of ethics – how moral is it to make something that costs, but will not be used a number of times. We have declined to make a fixed pavilion, because it would be unable to answer all the programs that might appear as its content in the future. What will you
do if someone comes up with a wish do display a giant sculpture in Venice?

I HAVE CONSIDERED THIS AS WELL, BUT DO NOT SEE IT AS A PROBLEM. A PAVILION, IN ANY FORM, IS JUST A PIVOTAL POINT. HOWEVER YOU USE IT, TO A CERTAIN EXTENT YOUR WORK STILL COMMUNICATES ITS RELATION TO THE PAVILION. EXHIBITING IN FIXED PAVILIONS, THE KIND WE RENT, IS ALSO SUBJECT TO LIMITATIONS AND IN A WAY SPATIALLY SPECIFIC; THE ONLY QUESTION IS TO WHAT EXTENT YOU ARE AWARE OF THIS AS A CREATIVE PROFESSIONAL. THIS PROJECT SEEMS TO ME MUCH MORE QUESTIONABLE REGARDING THE UNCERTAINTY OF ITS OUTCOME.

Yes, but this is a risk worth taking. We have the amount of self-confidence necessary to think that at this moment that decision might be the right one. The concept is Leo’s and not ours and we said right at the beginning - that’s excellent, there is nothing to add to this. We have already mentioned instability, as well as cultural, social, and other contexts. Today, with the collapse of Dubai, the question of building is a big question in the world of architecture, even if you work in an environment that is still very active in construction. This kind of instability must then be reflected on our cargo. Maybe it will be possible to really bring back these grids and use them for something else. Talking about Biennale, we often returned to Aldo Rossi and his Teatro del mondo, but we must not forget that this was a typical post-modern topic. He set his typology on water, similarly to our concept, and in this respect we are neither the first nor the last ones, but instability is conceptually still an excellent topic.

Our territory in Venice is unstable, in the same way building today is generally an unstable thing. I would like to return to the question of installation. Installation in some cases even architecture can always be, but only if it is useful, if someone can display his work within it. We are trying to imagine how it would be if Dalibor Martinis displayed his video work within it, and we adapted to it with a black canvas, electric installations etc. Whatever cargo we load on the barge, it must contain a room, because architecture is just that. Another interesting topic is also the fact that we are still in the phase of negotiations on where exactly we can moor in Venice. We have a lot of problems.

ALL RIGHT, WHICH PROBLEM ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?
The Italians have at first given us a completely useless place, a pier with billowing sea caused by the ships in the port, not by southern or northern winds. The shallower the sea, the higher the waves and at that location the depth is about two metres. With such a large object it can happen that, when inclined, it might touch the bottom. This is tsunami effect. In the ocean it exists only in the form of shallow energy, but when it reaches shallow seas, this wave of energy is compressed and a large wave emerges. The location primarily assigned to us has almost led to impossibility of realization. The position was utterly wrong, the cargo was impossible, the access to the barge almost impossible due to some low walls that must remain intact. We are still waiting for the answer on where we can moor the barge and if this is going to be possible at all.

IN THE END, SO MANY THINGS RELATED TO THE PAVILION REMAIN OPEN AND UNDEFINED. YOU ARE CONSTRUCTING A PAVILION, BUT THERE ARE NO DIRECTIONS HOW TO USE IT OR TO USE IT AT ALL. PRACTICALLY EVERYTHING IS LEFT TO THE INTERACTION AND DECISIONS OF FUTURE EXHIBITORS, COMMISSIONERS, AND ORGANIZERS.

Maybe nothing is defined in the way that someone tomorrow, if he intends to display paintings, has everything prepared to do so. This was not our aim. The interaction between the emergence of the pavilion and that which will be actually displayed has to be repeated and conceived in its final form every time. I think that such interaction also means greater potential for items on display. Any artist who succeeds us has the possibility to manipulate and interpret everything we have made as he likes.

HOW DID THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ALL OF YOU FUNCTION?
YOU ARE ONE OF THE MEMBERS OF THE TEAM WHO HAVE PREVIOUSLY WORKED MOSTLY INDIVIDUALLY. SOME ARE MORE EXPERIENCED IN COLLABORATIONS, EVEN INTERDISCIPLINARY ONES.

In comparison with some regular teams I really am a lonely wolf. I have conceived the majority of my works in the conceptual phase alone. Concerning the structure and organization of my office, things are somewhat different today. But even when you work entirely alone, you work within an environment. The closest environment is the place where you work, but only a bit further away is the circle of people you associate with and talk to. This situation is maybe just an intensified form of such social interaction, exchange of ideas, and our sporadic conversations. In some moments I truly enjoyed it, in really promising moments, charged with energy. The less you mention the word “I” in such a dialogue, the faster everything goes, free of tensions. An unbelievable diversity has created unexpected, completely new mutations, sometimes entirely useless and absolutely inefficient.
A LARGE PART OF WORK ON THIS PROJECT WAS RELATED TO
ATTEMPTS OF JOINT CONCEPTUALIZATION OF PROBLEMS YOU ARE
TRYING TO SOLVE AND THE MESSAGE YOU WISH TO COMMUNICATE.
IS THERE A FINAL JOINT STATEMENT? OR IS THE PAVILION
THAT STATEMENT IN ITSELF?
The statement was signed at our first meeting, later we had no
problems with that. It is hard to say that the pavilion in itself
is a statement, but the entire invested energy, team dynamics,
discussions and talks are maybe valuable content. I think that
the publication we are preparing, including these interviews,
will function as a certain interpreter of the project, not of its
final appearance, but of its procedure. Therefore I am not sure if
a statement, as a rounded-up closure, is necessary at all.

THERE WAS MUCH DISCUSSION ABOUT THE NATURALNESS OF THE
APPROACH TO THE BARGE AS A MEDIUM, ABOUT SHIPBUILDING
AND TECHNOLOGY. TO WHAT EXTENT HAS TECHNOLOGY INFLUENCED
THE WAY OF THINKING?
Steel has remained, construction steel that is to say, in the
form of cargo, which is entirely different. We had several
meetings in Kraljevica and from the beginning we were inclined
to actions oriented towards metal sheets, welding, and metal
plates. This was a normal way; however, its aim was not to stress
the cargo, but to get away from too conventional. We did not
intend to build a house on the barge, but to transform it into
something else with some elements, to turn it into something
different from a mere barge for towing on water, a ship. This
shift towards construction cargo is the continuation of this
story on transformation.

YOU HAVE CONSIDERED MANY IDEAS, PROPOSALS, AND VARIANTS.
WHICH OF THEM, OR WHAT KIND, YOU FOUND MOST INTERESTING?
I liked the variants that included the least interventions on the
barge as such. I liked the ideas of choreographing its movement
or rotation, like a sea dance in completely unexpected positions.
At some moments I suggested almost minimal interventions on it
and concentration on the situations it generates. As we had
problems with the location, we even considered towing it from
one place to another all of the time. Should it cause panic
somewhere, we could tow it to another place. It seemed to me
that thus the story of search and struggle for one’s place might
be tackled in an interesting way. We examined many variants,
and of this final one I can say that it carries certain visual
elusiveness – it can hardly be entirely visualised with certainty
before it is realized. We still do not know what it means to
be inside that grid and how much light it will let through.
According to rendered simulations, it seems that each visitor
creates his own horizon when you look out of the pavilion. I
have the feeling that this is going to be an interesting visual
attraction, which maybe does not need anything else; elements
will emerge that cannot be drawn or depicted, but we can still
sense them. It also interests me if the steel grid will create
an agreeable microclimate, without strong wind and draught. It
should become a pleasant environment, regardless of the character
and appearance of the material used for it.

THE OPPOSITE MIGHT HAPPEN AS WELL.
Yes, it could be rainy and waves could overturn us, but this
is the uncertainty we have agreed to from the beginning. There
is a relatively simple system of protection from rain, but this
is nothing we should be worried about in this case. I have no
experience of being in such space, I cannot foresee how pleasant
or not that will be, but the entire dynamics of the grid, light,
shadows, and the sea seems very attractive in the way it is
conceived.

IT LOOKS A BIT LIKE A WIREFRAME OF A STRUCTURE BEFORE
RENDERING.
Yes, it leaves the impression of being unfinished and that is
true. There are a few renders I find splendid: an illuminated
horizon that dissolves into a broad stretch of light towards the
corners and the end of the wall. I am so interested what that
will look like in reality.

HOW IS THE INNER SPACE FORMED? DOES IT, MORE LIKE EMPTY
SPACE, JUST DEMONSTRATE THE POTENTIAL OF A PAVILION BUILT
IN THIS WAY OR IS IT DESIGNED AS A FRAMEWORK FOR A
CERTAIN KIND OF EXHIBITION AND OTHER CONTENTS?
It rather demonstrates something, of course, because we do not
have a concrete task and did not need to be in a position to come
inside. With the pavilion we just want to show what it means
to build with a grid, what this means for the floor, the walls,
and the ceiling. We wanted to create different effects in such
circumstances, which means not to leave all four sides alike, but
achieve different relations by the thickness and density of the
grid. Because of that, the opening towards the outside is in some
places directed upwards, and in other places downwards. Through
such dynamics and the flickering of light generated in that way,
we are trying to demonstrate different possibilities. The form of
inner space should be understood in informal and non-obligatory
way. It is not the final shape. There are, of course, some other
technical elements that should be solved, so that usability is
ensured. It is important that visitors cannot sustain scratches
and that the wire mesh can be normally walked on...

HOW IMPORTANT IS INTERACTION WITH PEOPLE? WHAT DO YOU
THINK ABOUT THE IDEA THAT WITHIN THE PAVILION THERE ARE
OCCASIONAL ORGANIZED EVENTS?
The human element will be added there. By viewing and their
presence, people will set up a scale. Leo was constantly worried
with the question what we can do if nothing happens. However,
knowing how the Biennale functions, I am not so sure how
necessary it is to insist upon permanent events. People come
to Venice for a day or two, visit what they can and go away.
Therefore I think that it is sufficient that the pavilion is just
one exhibit or a station for a short visit, without something
else being produced inside. This entire sexy atmosphere with
the light penetrating through the grid, the wind blowing and the
changing views is sufficiently impressive. It is not necessary
to introduce other events along with that one, especially within
the framework to which we are limited.
I am interested in the term of cargo/load that almost all of you keep mentioning. What does it mean and how did it emerge?

We do not build architecture directly; we create a material volume and then produce space out of it by subtraction. This is the final concept that we have adopted and set out to realize. In four months of meetings, a series of concepts have emerged, developing in a rather linear way. The first was the one where we understood the barge not as an underlying structure to build upon, but as a separate mass whose inner space has to be activated in some way. Then there was a concept that approached the barge as artificial territory in the sense of enhancing public space – something which is, I presume, characteristic of all coastal towns. Here the barge was regarded as a possible event platform, maybe a small square or a playground where you initiate certain content and let everything develop without further interference. The third concept, almost accepted, was a room on the barge, which was interesting, because its immediate environment under the given circumstances is water. In the end, we selected the concept connected with the notion of cargo/load.

This proposal, to inhabit the barge, without erecting a structure (or load/cargo in this case) on it, was interesting. This was a good idea, but the givens of the barge did not permit the execution, because it has its static balance. We soon understood that it would be impossible to make it inhabitable and simultaneously retain its functionality, stability, and safety. We are talking about very delicate balance. The idea was very good, but to carry it out we would have to build a new barge with precisely determined properties. We would not be able to take over an existing one. Each barge is built for specific needs, the volume of air in it determines how much cargo it can carry and the like.

Have maybe the visits to the shipyard or the communication with engineers directly helped to see some ideas in a different light?

Visits to shipyards are not really a novelty for us. One of our earliest built projects, the Croatian Defenders’ Bridge in Rijeka, was entirely made in a shipyard. The shipbuilding technology and assembly techniques in that environment are familiar to us. Also the entrance part of the rebuilt Lika cinema theatre was made with the help of a naval engineer, exclusively with the technology of the shipbuilding industry. We had our first encounter with the barge at that time, because it was used for towing the bridge to its location. Accidentally, the barge now destined for Venice is the same one that was built for the assembly of the Croatian Defenders’ Bridge ten years ago. This is pure coincidence.

Has some part of that experience with shipbuilding practice influenced this project in a purely technical sense?

In classic architectural work you are actually never concerned about a structure’s centre of gravity. On land it is entirely unimportant if a part of a house is heavier than another part,
while in shipbuilding this is the first and the most important thing to observe. Everything is related to the centre of gravity. The entire load must be completely symmetrical and balanced. This is the first and the basic condition for any construction on a barge, for example. We regard the shipbuilding practice even with some envy, because it is much more sophisticated than architecture we build on land. Accuracy and error tolerance are a much more delicate question when you build at sea, so that naval engineers have developed software and other precise design tools a lot before the construction industry. As for the pavilion, apart from a few basic physical and technical properties and limitations, we can hardly speak of serious influence.

THERE WERE MANY CONNOTATIONS, REFERENCES, AND INSPIRATIONS FROM LOCAL NARRATIVES, BUT IN THE END YOU MANAGED TO FILTER IT ALL AND COME UP WITH AN IDEA THAT IN ITSELF DOES NOT COMMUNICATE ANY STORY. When you work in a group of fifteen people, what happens is a process of purification. Each thought has its lid. You just filter and purify, until you reach the elementary level. Of course, there have been different ideas and discussions, now hard to reproduce literally, but purification has resulted in what we now have. There are very many connotations that would be easier to communicate. One of the first things a Croat in Venice will tell you is that the city was built on foundations made of Croatian logs, which resulted in some ideas that we should build our pavilion of oak. This might perhaps function as Croatia teasing Venice, but in a large team of people you can hardly be content with an idea that banal.

HOW DO YOU INTERPRET THIS YEAR’S BIENNALE TOPIC PROPOSED BY KAZUYO SEJIMA IN THE CONTEXT OF YOUR PROJECT? Her sentence, “People meet in architecture”, can be interpreted in very many ways. If we understand it literally, then each house you use, i.e. which is not self-contained as an object, meets the set topic. We all hope that we create architecture that matches this description, or that we at least have the tendency to work in this manner. On the other hand, I think that Sejima wanted to say that architecture was not important in itself, but that the moment of encounter was important. In other words: when people gather, they create architecture. In that case, our concept includes the topic of the island and enhanced artificial territory, so that it can also be read as a direct answer to Sejima’s question. So, let us take the barge to Venice and provide it with content there - devise a program that runs all the way through the Biennale and gathers people. If that is so, then we do not have to create any kind of concrete architecture, because the content is what makes a place special and different. This was also one of the variants taken into consideration, that we do not have to make anything tangible, but maybe turn to some other profession that can help articulate events or assets that will attract people.

ONE OF THE MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUR PREVIOUS WORK WAS THE OPENNESS TO INPUT BY CREATIVE INDIVIDUALS FROM OTHER DISCIPLINES. HOW MUCH HAVE YOU CONSIDERED THIS HERE? We have previous experiences from the EXPO in Japan and Saragossa; all participations of that kind, where architecture is just one component of representation, are based on a multidisciplinary approach. This means that you meet like-minded film, video, and design artists in order to generate a particular
idea together and finalize your exhibit. For us in 3LHD this is usual methodology, because the process of creation in architecture is often hermetic... In a project like this, we need creative input from different disciplines to make it succeed in the end. Here it was almost impossible to apply that model, because there were already too many architects - together with Leo there were fifteen of us!


I agree. At any case I find art biennales more amusing then the usual methodology, because the process of creation in architecture is often hermetic... In a project like this, we need creative input from different disciplines to make it succeed in the end. Here it was almost impossible to apply that model, because there were already too many architects - together with Leo there were fifteen of us!


I understand why, but it seems to me that it is still a pity for an architect not to try to use this space he is given in order to make some, even modest contribution. We would not be part of this if we thought that we could not make this contribution. We are occupied with the execution of Leo’s idea about a floating pavilion, because we think it is good, but we take it as a fact - we are not examining the problem whether Croatia needs a pavilion at the Venice Biennale or not, but we are connected with the topic of a pavilion on water. Cargo/load on a barge is therefore a very specific project with somewhat altered rules. In order to acquire space, we have taken the material as our point of departure and examined and paraphrased the possibilities of subtraction within a pre-set mass. In a way, architecture has become the content of this project. But the same concept, executed in a different material and context should not be like this at all. It could really become a venue for future exhibitors at the Biennale. In the work on the pavilion you are concerned with some general topics, for example what kind of space is today necessary for contemporary art. This is similar to a discussion if something we call a museum of contemporary art needs an exhibition venue in traditional sense. It is hard to determine exactly what kind of venue contemporary art today needs, because its field of activity is actually unlimited. Why do we then build a house at all costs, as if this were self-explanatory, if we know that the most important question is not if a structure can fit into an exhibition venue or not. Museums that preserve any kind of heritage are a different thing, but if we speak about contemporary art, the question is if it will always be packed in architecture in the same manner. I do not know what kind of building is necessary if in one year you have, for example, an artist who decides to intervene with yellow tape in the entire city of Venice.

What you are saying is true, but an exhibition venue, or specifically a pavilion, is always needed as some kind of anchor point, no matter what the project at hand is like. This would be like abolishing some principal notions connected with art, because they have become obsolete, but at the same time you would thus, if nothing else, deprive it of some of its referential mainstays.

I agree. At any case I find art biennales more amusing then the usual methodology, because the process of creation in architecture is often hermetic... In a project like this, we need creative input from different disciplines to make it succeed in the end. Here it was almost impossible to apply that model, because there were already too many architects - together with Leo there were fifteen of us!


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Let me return to the last topic - I am not sure that from such general concepts of space, necessary for contemporary art, it is possible to determine a specific new form, a function or a new architectural task. It seems to me that things should be left as open as possible.

In most other cases, the task suggests the form; as a rule, with architecture you determine the ways space is used. Let me return to the Biennale and Sejima’s topic. Biennale will always remain a place where people meet. We can have a debate on the venue for contemporary art, but such a place of encounters and exchange of experiences cannot be replaced by the Internet or any other contemporary technology. We still believe in this when we speak about social contacts. We are physical beings, after all... In that respect the Biennale certainly has a perspective, as well as our pavilion, which has a great desire and will, despit all difficulties, to be moored to the quay in front of the Giardini for at least a short period and then move on to some other exhibition or task. To the Croatian side of the Adriatic, for example.
HOW IMPORTANT WAS THE ROLE OF THE STRUCTURE’S DESIGN IN RELATION TO THE CONCEPT AND THE SET AND DISCUSSED TOPIC?

More important was the initiative of tackling the issue of a long-term solution for the Croatian pavilion and then of solving this question not in political and administrative, but in authorial and creative terms. We have decided to support and serve Leo’s idea. In this respect the design is less important.

HOW DID THE DECISION-MAKING DYNAMICS WITHIN THE TEAM DEVELOP?

We made collective decisions in our meetings, by consensus; only in the later phase smaller groups took over the responsibility for a certain segment. The most interesting, but also the most demanding part was the work in a large group. Although we know each other very well and are well acquainted with the work of others, it is difficult to subject so many people to one single idea. In this sense, this is a multiple experiment. Both the idea and the work model were constantly re-examined. We were in a constant search for best ways of functioning together.

DO YOU THINK THAT THE EXPERIENCE OF WORK IN THIS COLLECTIVE WAS SOMETHING NEW AND DIFFERENT EVEN FOR THE ARCHITECTS WHO USUALLY WORK IN TEAMS?

3LD work as a group, most of the others work in pairs. I have experienced work in different collaborative formats, but this has proven more complex than anything before. The ones who have learned to work in a collective had enough time to run in their practices and define their roles within these collectives more precisely. Here we have a group of fourteen individuals who have to find the right way to build a part of each one of them into a common project.

THE PROJECT OF A FLOATING PAVILION WENT THE WAY FROM AN ALMOST CONCEPTUAL PROPOSAL TO THE IDEA OF SIMULATING A MODEL OF USUAL ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITIONS AND TO REALIZATION OF A CONCRETE STRUCTURE. DO YOU STILL SEE THIS FLOATING PAVILION PRIMARILY AS A FORM OF ADVOCATING AND DEMONSTRATING A LONG-TERM CONCEPT OR MAYBE AS A FINISHED, FUNCTIONAL EXHIBITION VENUE?

It is somewhere half way between installation and pavilion. It is less important whether it will be used on several occasions or be a lasting solution or just one in a series of possible materializations. However, this year we are thus presenting architecture live to the visitors, and not in a mediated way as this is custom in architectural exhibitions.

I PRESUME THAT SOME OF THE TEAM MEMBERS RATHER TEND TOWARDS ACADEMIC ARCHITECTURAL DISCOURSE, WHILE THE OTHERS ARE CLOSER TO PRACTICAL REALIZATIONS. HAS THIS BROUGHT AN INTERESTING DYNAMICS INTO YOUR COMMON CONSIDERATIONS?

I would say that, although in different formats, all work in the same discipline. In this sense I do not see this task as something out of the ordinary, but rather as a continuation of our everyday activities. We went the way from brainstorming, through misunderstandings and misinterpretations to acceptance of circumstances and this specific situation.

I WAS SOMewhat SURPRISED WITH THE AMBITION WITH WHICH YOU APPROACHED THIS PROJECT, THE MORE BECAUSE THE COMMISSIONER’S IDEA SEEMED TO ME VERY GOOD RIGHT AWAY, BUT TOO AMBITIOUS FOR EXECUTING IT IN REALITY. YOU BROUGHT UPON YOURSELF MUCH MORE WORK THAN EXPECTED, EVEN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BIENNALE.

We chose this unsafe path ourselves, while we could have, and maybe should have, followed the commissioners less ambitious initial idea. We accelerated our activities, but it might also happen that a good idea burns down too quickly.

HOW DID YOU SOLVE THE INSIDE OF THE PAVILION?

Although this is not a usual interior space, it will be inhabitable. It is carved out from gossamer-like tissue. It will activate different senses and it will also be a little bit dangerous.

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I have understood that the floating pavilion is in a way a statement in itself. In what relation are the design and this statement?

The very idea that the barge should go to Venice and that a country which otherwise has no pavilion in this way takes some kind of its own territory to the Biennale, is a clear statement. Elementary is also the idea that the barge carries a load, which is again a statement. Its shaping has emerged from the fact that a group of fourteen architects can hardly form one single space – so some have designed it, some have given their consent to this design or at least had nothing against it, because the points of departure - barge and cargo/load - are very clear. In Croatian context, design is a complex process in itself that implies a clear concept that gives a project a certain direction. The indeterminacy of a project in the sense of material, spatial organization, and appearance is present until the construction is finished. This indeterminacy is the result of flawed laws and political changes on the one hand and a too large number of new entrepreneurs, who wish to carry out their spatial visions.

Do these limitations have any advantages?

Absolutely, I am actually speaking about the advantages of this context. As individuals and as a group, we must be completely open and be entirely adaptable towards the investors' wishes, which are often unusual, as well as towards different problems and obstacles. Seeking a way to transform all those limitations into advantages is our task that we exercise every day.

From the very beginning you could count on particular narratives as points of departure or inspiration. There was a mention of oak, Leo’s personal connection with Kraljevica, but also a certain historical burden, then the story about shipyards and workers... None of these elements, however, got a direct vote in the final phase; they were neutralized and reduced one by one. Why?

We have selected the clearest concept, because of the experiences in the already described context. The concept of a floating pavilion materialized by the cargo/load, which alters the perception of the city, Venice, was stronger than individual signatures. The idea has surpassed the authorship. Our experience of designing in a context without set rules, with strong personalized interests, leads to this conclusion. The current speculations about the right to plan cities could maybe bring us, as a community, to a similar conclusion – only a clear strategy can protect public interests.

Are you afraid that potential exhibitors might be repelled by the idea to make a work of art within an artwork?

Of course, things are the same with every architectural work with recognizable identity, but this case is additionally specific.

National pavilions are spatial messages and the displayed artworks are part of that same message. Artists are often concerned with spatial atmosphere like Olafur Eliasson or Ivana Franke. Vjenceslav Richter’s national pavilions are conceived in the same way.

In the conceptualization of the barge pavilion, you all refer to the notion of cargo/load. What does this mean to you?

Cargo is expected on a barge, it is interchangeable and temporary, same as the barge itself – an exterritorial part of Croatian mainland, Croatian “territory” that makes a voyage to be displayed at the Venice Biennale. We have chosen welded wire mesh, which, set on the barge, organizes space.

What is this space like from the inside? In what way is it designed and with what ideas?

The design also formally follows the logic of the material and the desire that very clearly imposes the mass of the load. This mass is determined by the dimensions of the barge from the outside and gives the impression of stacked wire mesh. It seems to me interesting that space opens the possibility of a moiré effect. This is a flickering effect that makes the boundaries of space unstable, another instance of temporariness. Through the grid you can see Venice from other and different perspectives than the ones we are used to.

In the virtualizations I have seen so far, this grid somewhat reminds of a pile of stacked plates. The reinforcement meshes are determined by some characteristics that we use and highlight in order to stress their stability, because if they are set in any other position, they are unable to carry even their own weight. Horizontal mesh layers, connected with vertical rods, provide rigidity; they create a spatial grid or truss work. The presence of layers of wire mesh disappears by highlighting the moiré effect.
TO WHAT EXTENT DOES THE BIENNALE TODAY ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF DISCOURSE ON CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE?

It is certainly in the nature of an event like the Biennale to at least try to achieve this goal, but during the last decades there have not been many editions that had an echo like the Strada Novissima 1980. The exhibitors were the same architects who are the promoters of contemporary architecture today – Rem Koolhaas and Toyo Ito. They presented the new wave in architecture at Strada Novissima and it really had a great impact on twentieth century architecture. During the last decade, the stress is increasingly on the presentation of individual opuses or current works of architects and there are less new themes that could be interpreted as a manifesto.

IF I EXAGGERATE THINGS A BIT, I MIGHT SAY THAT HERE YOU ARE TURNING A CURATORIAL IDEA INTO PRACTICE, ALTHOUGH IN ARCHITECTURE THIS HAS MUCH LESS QUESTIONABLE CONNOTATIONS THAN IN ART.

A curator can interpret his idea in many ways. Leo’s idea emerged from the fact that we do not have a permanent pavilion in Venice and that we wish to create such a venue. At the beginning it was not clear if eight teams would design separate projects from which we would select the best one, or if we were going to take advantage of this special situation and create a common work by joint effort. I think that this second solution was more appropriate to the situation, much more than leaving things at the level of simulation of an ordinary competition. Besides, it is more interesting to direct individual energy and sensibilities into a new asset.

IS THERE AN ELEMENT THAT YOU ESPECIALLY FELT AS MATCHING ALL YOUR SENSIBILITIES?

If we all were alike or if there were no clash of different opinions and mentalities, our work would be boring. The barge, as a pre-set element, introduced micro-rules that we had to observe: dimensions, characteristics of a body on the water, almost the properties of a ship, but maybe rather of a ground able to carry a heavy load. This was the common denominator that helped to even out our differences. And of course, one should always show a portion of tolerance and readiness to yield.

MANY OF YOUR COLLEAGUES SPOKE ABOUT THE NOTION OF INSTABILITY. THIS INSTABILITY IS, AS IT SEEMS TO ME, A KIND OF LEITMOTIF OF THE ENTIRE PROJECT; AMONG OTHER THINGS, IT EMERGES FROM THE CHARACTER OF THE BARGE AND ITS CARGO.

More or less, we have all analysed the character of the barge as a structure. Instability, as one of its properties, does not refer only to the barge, but also to everything it will carry, the persons standing on it and experiencing its cargo. In one of the phases of our meetings we had the idea of over-exaggerating this instability. Because the barge contains chambers that help regulate balance and stability, we asked ourselves if by some intervention we could disrupt its stability and bring the barge in unexpected situations and relations. There has, however,
always been the awareness that what we are doing must not be a performance, but architecture, so that we gave up some of the ideas. If it is a room, which properties does it have on a barge?

In the end, the cargo/load theme emerged. In this case, the cargo is the medium in which space is created by “subtraction” and can be altered for each upcoming Biennale. The barge without cargo is like a house without people. Its entire anatomy, form, and statics are derived from this, same as the anatomy of a tanker that carries oil or a ship that carries containers depends on their cargo. It does not have maritime characteristics, because it does not have to cut through the waves. Because this time it is exclusively a group of architects in question and that this is a biennale of architecture, we knew that the first pavilion on the water would be an exhibit in itself.

TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE EXTERNAL INFLUENCES AND LIMITATIONS FORMED THE PROJECT?
Financial means played a very important role; to some extent they determined the quantity of the steel welded wire mesh, its thickness and size. The last location assigned to us was in shallow waters, which limited the weight of the cargo. External factors always participate in architectural design. When you work on projects, you keep encountering different limitations that hinder you and lead into the unknown, but at the same time they lead you to unexpected solutions, making architecture an interesting work. Take, for example, the Erechteion – why are there caryatids and not columns? Because the temple is built on two levels, the classic columns would lose their real proportion and seem too thickset. Had it not been for that fact, there would have been no Erechteion as we know it. We should not oppose limitations; they should be embraced and included.

WHAT ABOUT ADMINISTRATIVE LIMITATIONS AND PROCESSES? ARE THEY ALSO ARCHITECTURAL CONTENT?
They are content, under the circumstances. All our predecessors at Biennales had to go through the same procedure, but the next one could never profit from that. This is a topic that should be of interest to the Ministry of Culture. The Biennale is certainly important for Croatia, and it should be promoted at this kind of event.

LET US NOT FORGET THAT THE EXHIBITION MODEL IN VENICE IS STILL THE TRADITIONAL MODEL OF NATIONAL REPRESENTATION. WHAT DOES THIS PROJECT IN THAT SENSE COMMUNICATE ABOUT THE CURRENT MOMENT OF THE CROATIAN ARCHITECTURAL SCENE?
The clarity of ideas is something that determines Croatian architecture through a longer period. If we try to analyse everything that is truly valuable in Croatian architecture – from the chapel in Nin to Vitić’s and Planić’s buildings, Novakova Street etc. – we shall see that it is always very simple, elementary, with a clear spatial concept and without superfluous details. The essence is always in space. This is what the new Croatian pavilion should be like, elementary and with a clear message: barge – cargo/load – space = Croatian pavilion.
If I remember well, Leo was rather surprised with such pressure on your side to construct something. He said that from the position of his academic experience as well as practical experience from the US, he was somewhat surprised with that persistence to build. Maybe we got the upper hand there in some way. He probably expected that the solution would go towards conceptual investigation, because his personal attitude was that in Croatia critical thought in architecture is underdeveloped. Apart from that, most of us are established builders, so that we do not desperately need to construct such a pavilion. I still do not know what to think. Maybe the fact that we all are practical builders really is a kind of handicap. We do not want to indulge in theory and investigation too much, the more because this year’s Biennale topic is the relation between people and architecture. Kazuyo Sejima has set things simply and clearly – people make architecture, personalities and events under its roof, and not bare walls, glazing and beautiful elevations. It seemed to us that, in comparison with the continuation of an academic discourse in which the end architects address other architects, it would be better and more interesting to make something tangible.

In the context of your words, I find it interesting that the structure you will be towing to Venice looks almost virtual. It seems to me as if it were somewhere half way between a representation of the idea of a pavilion and a finished, functional pavilion.

We are aware of that. In our discussions we often asked the question of the pavilion’s functionality. The budget and the time frame were definitive limitations, so that we had to focus on the beginning of the idea of the pavilion; it will, however, within this budget plus additional sponsor supports that we hope to activate, provide us with a starting point for the future. We did not think that this would be an entirely functional house, but a structure that leaves the possibility of further interventions and additions by future authors. In the current phase of the project, it can be regarded as a concretization of a diagram or a sketch. At any case, it is just an outline, a scheme; it is abstract, inhabitable, at the same time concrete and elusive. We should not forget that we are talking about fourteen or fifteen architects. The cross-section of all our clusters of interests and reflections is a very small, narrow field. The scheme contained in the pavilion is, in my opinion, this narrow field. If anyone of us worked alone, the result would be radically different. A rope pulled from both sides always shows very little movement along the line. I don’t know how clearly this depicts the situation, but this is my personal experience of this workshop. Architects actually like to work with limitations. The problem here was that we had very few limitations, apart from the budget. But the budget is normally always low, so that we do not count that as a limitation as well. The barge as object makes sense only if it carries a load. Carrying a load is its basic purpose. Welded wire mesh is the principal synonym of construction in architecture, but on the other hand also of “pure” architecture that has its reverse, as you say, virtual quality. This has maybe helped us to avoid the traps of sculptural, Gehry-like design. The iconic function of the pavilion is thus eliminated, so that we could move more freely, at the same time avoiding the expression of individual authorship and personality.

Architectural exhibitions often border with design and also with the medium of art installation. Where is your project in relation to these coordinates? What you say is true. Today artists and architects often collaborate on such projects, not only one-sidedly. For example, Olafur Eliasson has twenty architects employed in his office. These two disciplines are definitely converging, although we still always feel the border when architecture becomes installation and vice versa. In that sense, our barge will definitely be architecture.

I find this rare situation intriguing, in which advocating a realization or maybe a future practice starts from underneath, from architects. The point is maybe in socialist heritage, in the period when architects were interwoven with city structures and city-planning institutes. At that time they were initiators of spatial concepts, while today this role has been taken over by investors. What we are doing is a negligibly small space within the framework of an event that involves a large, but limited number of people. It is interesting how we at the Biennale tend to retain the position that belongs to our profession by definition and its logic.

How do you see the role of the Biennale today? Maybe the role of this or that EMO has turned into a circus, maybe it is too large, but it is still a necessary event. Through topics that are sometimes well, sometimes not so well chosen, commissioners still examine the reality of our work, which is in principle good. If I am expected to be critical, I can say that what maybe bothers me most is that it problematizes things less and less and that it keeps turning into some kind of architectural EMO. Art biennales have retained more freshness.

Which modifications would this project require in case that next year it is used for displaying some other cargo in Venice? There are two levels of adaptation. There is a possibility of adapting the pavilion in the way of adding a sliding roof and dimming the light. The other system we count on is a radical reaction to the idea of cargo/load. We do not exclude the possibility that the next time this cargo is not welded wire mesh, but something else. Our colleague Randić has proposed the idea of empty plastic bottles as cargo, which would directly introduce social themes. Future authors are invited to intervene, i.e. to create their cargo, which also means a new environment on the barge. The barge is just an empty platform, easy to transport. It is a platform that can accommodate many different ideas. We do not feel too strong emotional ties to the pavilion that will be built as a structure. We needed it just to communicate a good idea.
thinking, and contacts with Lebbeus Woods. It is nevertheless a visionary, academic circle, for us here almost a parallel world. Our entire group is a group of people who attained recognition through built structures. That is what we all do. However, conceptual reflections on architecture and its execution are not so far apart, they are the same thing. Our project also features this conceptual level.

It seems to me that one of the principal characteristics of the proposed form is its neutrality. It can not only absorb many meanings, but now it is on the border between something that is only a structure representing a certain idea and something that in its final form could become a functional pavilion. The result is in a way a reflection of the budget, time, and all those joint circumstances. This is a situation with a maximum amount of conditions, which is probably the best characteristic of the project that caused its openness and the possibility to bring different kinds of art and events to affirmation. It is maximally neutral, it can be transformed into many things, and it can be concretized in different ways.

How much of your previous practical and other experience have you built into this project? Which previously learned aspects were familiar to you, useful, and applicable?

The collaborative model was very familiar to us, because in our office we work with young people, and apart from that we had a couple of projects in which we invited visual artist to collaborate with us. We worked together with Ivana Franke on the mobile pavilion for the Venice Biennale in 2004. Our recently finished building on Budicka Road is also a collaboration project with Ivana Franke and the artist Silvio Vujicic. We are very familiar with the topic of the relation between architecture and art installation. We have actually invited the two of them into our team to work with us as if they were architects. We have treated some specifically architectural topics together and in consequence they constructed their installations within the structure of the building. I really must stress that the artists have made architectural decisions together with us during the entire process.

Is this approach to work not a kind of luxury, attainable to only a limited number of architects? Is this the most challenging side of our work that every task is completely new, with new problems, joys, and experiences. Architectural work should never become routine.

How do you see the question of responsibility in this case?

This is at the same time a question of added value, because responsibility is always connected with added value, and architecture differs from construction work in that added value. This entire project and its manifesto, expressed through...
construction, seem to me as a major added value. Within the budget and the brief, we are infiltrating some values into the project that nobody expects or intends to additionally pay for them. This is where responsibility lies, because if you build, if money is spent, if something happens, then this must surpass the expectations.

**The Delicate Part of the Story is the Link with Shipyards in a Crisis, Which Emerged from Some of the Initial Ideas of the Project. How Important or Interesting Was That Idea to You Personally?**

At the start, there certainly existed that romantic, moving component. Leo is from Kraljevica and in some way wants to support a branch that is now in huge problems, prone only to very negative connotations. He hinted that it would be good to include shipbuilders as partners, but we did not go into that topic further, at least not directly. We like this as a basis, which probably provided the project with its initial power, but had we given it more room, the entire project would have gone into a different direction.

**How Do You See the Role of the Biennale Today?**

It is to a large extent a very old form, which is maybe not really contemporary, but still very popular, so that all architects and artists are trying very hard. However, the problem with architecture is always that it cannot be displayed in a proper way; it cannot be unambiguously translated into the exhibition medium. National presentations within the Biennale framework are a chance for transferring certain topics from certain contexts into a salon format. Maybe that is the reason why we are still doing this. Maybe these small national pavilions can reflect something special from a particular environment...

**What Do Biennales Mean in Building up a Discourse on Contemporary Architecture?**

Biennales are no reference in that respect. But is the Biennale not a good medium for communication of particular ideas at international level or at least among a large number of colleagues?

Yes, maybe it is sufficient that people communicate, even during that short time. I am very interested what the Biennale will be like this year, because I have learned that many countries have cancelled their participation.

I find it interesting that all architects have stressed the importance of consistence with the medium in these interviews, while on the other hand you actually work with an object, a barge that is not architectural as such.

In our current situation, the medium is building material. This medium is interwoven with space. We manipulate space, and space is delineated by some concrete elements. This means that we simultaneously have a medium and space that form and define (but also not define) each other. The relations between them are fluid.
A book on that topic has recently been published; it is connected both with the director and the topic of this year’s architecture exhibition. I am talking about Olafur Eliasson’s book entitled Your Chance Encounter. The book speaks about his exhibition in Seijima’s building, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, in which Eve Blau in her text, among other things, treats the topic of the neutrality of exhibition space. Eliasson’s approach has turned the traditional understanding of exhibition space upside down: instead of architecture creating a neutral framework for art, a work of art presents architecture. It is in this kind of installation that brings the idea of a floating pavement to recognition. By the way, the first barge proposed by Leo was much more interesting in the context of linking different realities. It is the barge that belongs to the Adriatic Maritime Service that collects waste waters from holding tanks at open sea in order to avoid the pollution of the coastal area. We were interested what it would mean to bring an ecological working vessel to Venice as exhibition venue, which the rest of the year serves an entirely different purpose. We always return to the question of how far architecture and the Biennale have gone from reality and if we should direct them back to the dialogue with everyday life. In this sense, this barge was in a dialogue both with the topic of a floating pavement and the topic of the Biennale.

YOU PLAYED WITH AN ENTIRE SERIES OF REFERENCES THAT WERE SET AT THE BEGINNING, OR THAT EMERGED FROM YOUR DISCUSSIONS. WHICH WERE THE MOST IMPORTANT OR INTERESTING ONES TO YOU?

There is a number of important references; as this is national presentation, for me it was primarily about the relation to the sea, very important for the determination of the Croatian region. The fact that we are a maritime country should logically also mean active relations to the sea, which we do not have in Croatia today. It is enough that you go to Savudrija and you will clearly see the border between the Slovenian and the Croatian sea: half of it is cramped and the other half is empty. Of course, their sea is full, because it is small, but our people use the sea much less than the Slovenes, who are historically not connected with the Adriatic. As regards shipbuilding and the Kraljevica Shipyard, it is rather Leo’s personal attachment to it that plays a role here than its real importance for the barges from this story – neither the first nor the second barge has been built in this shipyard. But here we come to a different topic, which is accumulation of immense shipbuilding knowledge, which is now completely scattered and might soon vanish, but can still be seen in Kraljevica. Building large ships looks impressive, their superstructure, as large as a six-storey house, when finished, is lifted by a crane and simply welded to the hull. It is incredible that this knowledge was never seriously applied in civil engineering; there were such attempts by the 3. maj crew, but things were left at that. Shipbuilding technologies are somewhat different from standard construction technologies, even the steel structures have different forms, but on the other hand these two situations are quite similar: in addition, a house on a ship keeps inclining all the time. It is incredible how little we use that knowledge in architecture, the more because modernism and its aesthetic have inherited a lot from naval aesthetics. This cut is physically visible in the shipyard: the wire fence of the shipyard clearly divides two parallel worlds; the structures on its perimeter have nothing to do with that which is going on within the shipyard, not even one is made of metal sheets for shipbuilding, they are all built from concrete blocks. This merger simply never happened, however characteristic this era is for different crossover concepts.

IT IS INTERESTING THAT THE FIRST IDEAS THAT GENERATED YOUR INITIAL DISCUSSIONS WERE FOCUSED ON THE BARGE ITSELF, WITHOUT SPECIAL EXTENSIONS OR A LOAD. WAS IT OUT OF ROMANTIC FASCINATION OF ARCHITECTS WITH SHIPBUILDING?

It is less the fascination with shipbuilding, but rather the wish to stress the non-standard context of architecture and to see what can happen within it. Actually are these discussions rather a result of ignorance in regard to shipbuilding than of fascination with it. One of the ideas was that the barge should turn over and around, which, through changes in geometry, would provide its inner space with a different character. After sincere amazement, naval engineers have even devised how such a vessel might be made, but that idea does not correspond to the barge or the budget. An interesting idea was the changing deck height, which in extreme case would descend to the sea level. This would be possible, again not with a barge, but with a dock. A barge would simply sink. Both these concepts played with instability and lack of balance, but in the end it became evident that the barge did not offer such possibilities.

IN WHAT RELATION ARE THE FINAL FORM OF THE PAVILION AND CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS YOU HAD GONE THROUGH UNTIL YOU REACHED THE PRESENT FORM?

The final form is actually a result of a mistake. The pavilion is defined by delineated space which is not necessarily roofed-over. When we started to make simulations of such spaces that neither turn nor sink, each model looked rather as a shoe box then as an exciting structure. So, in the end the most interesting model was the one that should have simulated a space created by streams of water. Because water is not easy to depict, our assistant made a result of ignorance in regard to shipbuilding than of a space which in extreme case would descend to the sea level. This would be possible, again not with a barge, but with a dock. A barge would simply sink. Both these concepts played with instability and lack of balance, but in the end it became evident that the barge did not offer such possibilities.

Saša Randić was involved in the project until July 25th 2010
Leo’s initial idea was to organize an exhibition in a hired pavilion in the Arsenale, where we would have displayed eight or nine models that would have represented our view of the Croatian pavilion on a barge next year or in near future. When he entrusted us with the task that our eight groups, or fourteen people, should each present his/her idea of the pavilion, to all of us this gesture seemed marginal if compared to the idea that the barge should really set out from Croatia and be towed to Venice. To suppress so many egos in one place for the sake of one project seemed to me a huge effort, I almost could not believe it. To be honest, I expected great problems, but after a number of sessions with the present crew, egotism ceased to pose a problem (or at least we hide it well) and the operation develops fine. When we came to the conclusion that we are really going to Venice with a real barge, this was almost the end of our initial problems. Later on we had problems of a different kind.

IT IS INTERESTING THAT THIS WHAT YOU CALL WELDED WIRE MESH CAN ON THE ONE HAND FUNCTION SYMBOLICALLY, AS AN INSTALLATION IN SPACE, AND ON THE OTHER AS THE REINFORCEMENT BASIS THAT IN COMBINATION WITH OTHER MATERIALS CAN BE TRANSFORMED INTO A NEW OBJECT. That is right. Next year, an additional element can also be a common bed sheet, paper, or cardboard, depending on who our representative will be. This representative will interpret the pavilion in accordance with his understanding of it. Screening is also possible, in the most banal case oils on canvas can also be displayed and treated with good lighting etc. We are primarily architects who want to design a venue where during the next few years artist might offer their own concepts.

THE IDEA OF WELDED WIRE MESH WAS PRECEDED BY THE IDEA OF CAGE, WHICH, IT SEEMS TO ME, AS A FORM EVEN MORE LITERALLY ADDRESSES THE QUESTION OF SPACE AND TERRITORY. WHAT HAVE THESE DIFFERENT CONCEPTS ADDED AND TAKEN AWAY IN THE PROCESS? Different situations have directed us towards different conclusions. On the one hand, we are constructing a pavilion as if it would be done in the Arsenale, and then we relocate it onto...
I think that after these few months of meetings and discussions I am a much better person than before. This project really helped me to sort out some things in my head. But what will happen in the end, I really don’t know. This process enabled me to experience different and for me new work methods, even to compare how I function in relation to others or how they function in relation to me, however schizophrenic this process may seem to some. I would also like to include the emails into the documentation of the project, so that we can look upon everything that has happened as a kind of big brother. Once I even brought the DVD with the film about Metallica, *Some Kind of Monster*, to inspire my colleagues. I am not the band’s fan, but...

...but you saw something inspiring in a document of their inner clashes and group therapy?

Yes, exactly that! When this film was made, they were already in the phase when they had more than enough money, all the best songs were already recorded, they had attained recognition as authors long time ago, so they reached the moment at which they must ask themselves – what now? This film recorded an honest experience of a serious catharsis. Their new songs are not better than the ones before, but I am certain that they emerged from that process as better persons. That is the exact reason why I wanted to show this film.
I DIS TURATO

YES, THIS WAS PROBABLY ONE OF THOSE “BACK TO THE ROOTS” ATTEMPTS. YOUR WORKSHOP MEETINGS ARE SOMETHING SIMILAR IN THAT SENSE.

Yes, but this is even worse than workshops. It reminds me of post-war volunteer works and their enthusiastic collective spirit! We are all recognized enough and have nothing to lose, and you can truly get rid of your ego when you really have nothing to lose. When young people work in a group, they in principle kid themselves. They are not strong enough to work alone, so they found a group and split after some time. I think it happened this way with all groups in art. Both EXAT 51 and Žemlja (Earth) were founded out of the need to be on the safe side and stronger, but after the individual authors attained recognition, they decided to go their own ways. Here we have the opposite case. We are not young, we have achieved professional recognition earlier and now we are actually taking a step back. We are examining if we can work even better in a collective or not.

ALL RIGHT, MAYBE THE MOST INTERESTING THING IS THAT SOME BASIC PARAMETERS ARE DIFFERENT, SO THAT YOU FOUND YOURSELF WITH FRESH THOUGHTS ON FRESH GROUND. THAT IS POSSIBLE. YOU KNEW, I AM REALLY GLAD THAT YOU TALK TO EVERYBODY SEPARATELY, WITHOUT OTHERS KNOWING WHAT YOU TALK ABOUT. FROM THE CATALOGUE YOU MUST BE ABLE TO READ BOTH THE COLLECTIVE AND THE INDIVIDUAL ASPECT. SIMILARLY TO ART, ARCHITECTURE HAS BECOME SOMewhat HERMETIC AND WITHIN ITS OWN SCENE ALSO VERY FORESEEABLE. AND ARCHITECTS ARE MUCH MORE THAN ARTISTS. THEY ARE ACTUALLY SPLIT PERSONALITIES – THEY CREATE FANCY THINGS FOR MONEY AND THEN AT BIENNALES THEY FAKE TO INVESTIGATE ARCHITECTURE. PLEASE, DON’T PLAY ME FOR A SUCKER.

I STILL THINK THAT THIS BIENNALE FRAMEWORK IS GOOD FOR ARCHITECTS. IT REQUIRES FROM PEOPLE TO REFLECT ON THEIR PROFESSION AND ITS BROADER CONTEXT. MAYBE THIS IS SOMETIMES PHONY, AS YOU SAY, BUT I AM CERTAIN THAT ALL THE THINGS IN THE END VERY INHERENT IF DONE THIS WAY. THIS IS TRUE, BUT THE QUESTION IS WHAT KIND OF AUTHORS WE ARE TALKING ABOUT. I FELT RATHER PROVOKED BY THE PREVIOUS BIENNALE, WHEN AARON BETSKY INVITED SOME ARCHITECTS TO REFLECT ON THE IDEA OF ARCHITECTURE BEYOND BUILDING. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN IF WE SPEAK OF ZAHA HADID, WHO HAS DESIGNED EVERYTHING – FROM SHOES TO AIRPORTS – AND EVERYTHING LOOKS ALIKE. WHAT DOES SUCH AN ARCHITECT HAVE TO SAY ON THE TOPIC BEYOND BUILDING, IF HE/SHE DESIGNS A SOFA THAT LOOKS LIKE A MODEL OF A BUILDING OR A DESIGNER SHOE, AND THEN REPLICATES THIS WITHOUT ANY DETACHMENT OR IRONY?

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF KAZUYO SEJIMA’S THIS YEAR’S CONCEPT?

I LIKE THAT TOPIC. I AM PERSONALLY INTERESTED ONLY IN ARCHITECTURE THAT CONNECTS PEOPLE AND GENERATES TOGETHERNESS. I DO NOT BELIEVE IN TYPOLOGIES OR PRE-SET SCENARIOS – ONLY AN ARCHITECTURE THAT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO GENERATE TOGETHERNESS IN A CERTAIN GROUP OF PEOPLE IS THE RIGHT ARCHITECTURE. ITS APPEARANCE, THE WAY IT IS DESIGNED, AS WELL AS THE MATERIAL USED FOR CONSTRUCTION ARE SECONDARY. LET ME REPEAT: THE FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT THING IN ARCHITECTURE ARE PEOPLE AND ALL OTHER THINGS EVERYONE LEARNS AT THE UNIVERSITY.

WHICH ADDITIONAL CRITERIA WILL THE PAVILION HAVE TO MEET TO BECOME USABLE AGAIN AFTER THIS BIENNALE IS OVER?

I DO NOT THINK THAT ARCHITECTURE HAS TO MEET ALL PHYSICAL AND TECHNICAL CRITERIA TO BE UsABLE. ST. MARK’S SQUARE IS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PUBLIC PLACE ON EARTH WHEN IT RAINS.

CAN WE TALK ABOUT AN EXHIBITION VENUE AS PUBLIC SPACE?

SOMEONE’S CHURCH, A SHOPPING MALL OR A MUSEUM ARE PRIVATE PLACES, BUT WITHOUT PUBLIC THEY CANNOT FULFILL THEIR FUNCTION. ON THE OTHER HAND, EVERY ARCHITECTURE THAT GATHERS PEOPLE AND ENABLES THEM TO ENJOY CERTAIN SPACE WITHOUT IMPOSING ON THEM CERTAIN BEHAVIOUR CAN BE PUBLIC SPACE. IN THIS SENSE, PUBLIC SPACE CAN BE EVEN AN APARTMENT ON THE TWELFTH FLOOR OF A BUILDING. SPEAKING SERIOUSLY, RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS PUBLIC SPACE IS AN INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT QUESTION. I THINK THAT THE ZAGREB BLOCK MUST BE OPENED AND REBUILT BY ALL MEANS, BUT NOT IN A WAY IN WHICH THAT IS DONE NOW. WRONG METHODS ARE TO BLAME.

HOW DID THE IDEA OF WELDED WIRE MESH EMERGE?

The primary idea was to work with steel sheets used in shipbuilding. We wanted it to be locally specific and by all means low tech; at a certain point we had some ten models before us on the table. One of them represented an idea by TONČI ŽARNIĆ and two other architects from the group, to make a pavement whose form would be determined by thin streams of water. One of them made a model of this, executed as a kind of net. When I saw it, it seemed to me excellent, but I did not recognize that the material in question was actually a fluid. The others laughed, of course. This means that we reached an even better idea of steel mesh, which contains almost mathematical precision and liberty. Then we started to interpret that as a cargo/load similar to the one when reinforcement mesh is transported to a construction site. Silvija had the idea to carve that load inside and generate space. I even thought of corrosion. This year, we will have to let the mesh corrode for a couple of months and then we’ll either have to freeze the corrosion at some point or let the structure die away, like a dandelion. I am privately very fond of the theme of dying away, so close to life, although some interpretations of it can be very dangerous.

YOU HAVE INCLUDED STUDENTS OF ARCHITECTURE, WHO DO THE DRAWING INSTEAD OF YOU, WHY?

I DID NOT LIKE THE IDEA THAT WE DRAW OURSELVES, BECAUSE DRAWING IS ALSO A PERSONAL ACT AND WE WANTED TO SUPPRESS PERSONALITIES. TONČI ŽARNIĆ AND PETAR MIŠKOVIC INTRODUCED STUDENTS INTO THE PROJECT. THEIR WORK SHOULD NEUTRALIZE THE ARTIST'S HAND.

IT IS A SIMILAR PROCEDURE TO THAT WHICH YOU ARE NOW DOING WITH THE INTERVIEWS. YOU ARE TRYING TO REVEAL SOME OF THE PROJECT’S CHARACTERISTICS, BUT YOU ARE NOT INTERPRETING IT DIRECTLY.
WHAT WERE YOU ACTUALLY WORKING WITH – IDEAS, DETAILED SKETCHES, INSTRUCTIONS, BLUEPRINTS? HOW MUCH ROOM HAVE THE TASKS YOU WERE ENTRUSTED WITH LEFT YOU TO INTERPRET, DESIGN, ELABORATE, AND IMPROVE THOSE IDEAS?

I worked with ideas, sketches, and instructions. The basis of everything was conversation, like in tutorials, which left some room for interpretation. Of course, everything that I have done and that I am still doing I tried to do as well as I could, so I cannot speak about elaborating or improving an idea, because we all strive in that direction. I felt an unlimited amount of confidence the team set in me, which created a very pleasant work climate. All ideas, sketches, instructions, and plans, as well as the produced objects, were studied critically, so that the entire process functioned in that way.

DO YOU SEE THIS KIND OF WORK AS DIFFERENT IN SOME RESPECT, NEW OR SPECIAL IN RELATION TO YOUR PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES AT THE UNIVERSITY AND ELSEWHERE?

Every kind of work connected with architecture communicates its projects through ground-floor plans, cross-sections, visualizations, models, and similar generally accepted forms. The designing of the pavilion for the Biennale sets architecture into a different framework and leaves much room for experimenting. Pavilions are often think-tanks for many ideas that later on live in different typologies. The demands of a pavilion are different from any other typology. I cannot compare this with the experience at the university or elsewhere, but I can find points of intersection. This kind of work is in many respects specific, new, and special. Especially interesting is the medium the pavilion works with. 35 tons of welded wire mesh make many decisions hard, while the medium, which is normally invisible building substance, hidden in concrete, here becomes the principal and only one.

HOW DO YOU SEE COLLABORATIVE DYNAMICS IN SUCH A LARGE ARCHITECT TEAM? HAVE YOU FELT SINGLED OUT AT ALL? IN WHAT WAY WERE IDEAS AND DEMANDS FILTERED TOWARDS YOU, CONCERNING THE FACT THAT THERE WERE SO MANY VOICES?

Collaboration of a large number of persons always brings advantages and disadvantages. The dynamics was constant and fluent. This is best seen from the production of project-related material and solution variants, which deserves respect if we take into the account everyone’s other tasks. Everyone always had his task and did his part of work, so that there was no feeling of being singled out. We are all here with the same goal. Ideas and demands, towards everyone and thus also towards me, were filtered at the end of the meetings and through conversation. As something was needed, the work on it was done.

YOUR MODEL WAS ESSENTIAL FOR SOME OF THE MAJOR DECISIONS CONCERNING THE FORM OF THE PAVILION,ALTHOUGH AT THE BEGINNING THEIR READING OF YOUR WORK WAS ACTUALLY A
I would not say that they were decisive, but that they were helpful in the interpretation. At the beginning we made 16 barges and 14 interventions on them, based on some sketches and different ideas set before us. We interpreted them considering the given conditions and the time we had on disposal. Saša Relić helped us by letting us work in his model workshop equipped with a new laser cutter, which increased our production. This generated the first wave of materialization of ideas, still created for the exhibition of projects. The pavilion, today in the shipyard, combines almost everything from those 14 models. The model maybe closest to the final decision showed a water mass with a passage. It was made from several layers of translucent grille. The crucial decision was that the barge should carry a load. Models were a means for thinking about things.

While you worked on simulations, did you rather think in architectural or sculptural terms? Have you experienced the pavilion and its different versions as an exhibit or as functional and completely defined architecture?

I consider sculpture and art in general very important in correlation with architecture. In my reflections I did not focus on terminology, but on an entire series of images and experiences that appear here. The key thing is that a pavilion of this kind is possible only in welded wire mesh and that it does not function in a different material. Here a series of especially poetic images appear, which everyone interprets and experiences differently, like a breeze blowing through the pavilion, lapping waves, refractions from the waves and many others. I think that it would be absolutely wrong to make the pavilion an exhibit in itself. It is rather an exercise area, one that our architecture and art at the biennale did not have, because the Yugoslav pavilion became property of Serbia. Its functionality as a pavilion must be enabled, but its final definition is not necessary. What’s more, the possibility of dismantling it and the presumed polyvalence accept different reactions.

What is your reading of this project and the pavilion in general for the biennale?

The entire area of Giardini and the Arsenale, as well as the biennial exhibition are a special place and event. The majority of pavilions are architectural masterworks of their time. The concept of a floating pavilion on the barge has an enormous impact. This project follows the topic of the Biennale and creates its context that corresponds to the one in Venice, but also elsewhere. The cargo/load is interpreted in a way that creates architecture. There are many more layers of the project than there are layers of the wire mesh.

Due to his exceptional contribution to the project, the group decided to list architecture student Pero Vuković as an equal an author of the project.
I was primarily fascinated by the fact that all traditional and
conventional architectural means were excluded. Each variant
that included traditional understanding of architecture at the
relocated place and on the unstable ground of the barge was
pointless, because it produced a “house” in the context in which
a “house” cannot be anchored. Therefore, this could not be a
house, but it had to be something that manipulates building
material. In this case is building material alone the barge’s
cargo/load, which has architectural effects, i.e. this is also
another some equivalent to architecture. The problem
question is can we achieve architectural effects by means that
do not belong to architecture? In the first place, the barge is
not solid ground; it cannot carry a house.

This is an interesting manipulation with perception, because the
barge transports cargo, it is a kind of usable platform; so can
this barge with a load become a form of building substance? In
this way, it drifted further towards instability, or actually the
impossibility of one solution, which is that every time the
barge and its cargo can be set into new space. Instead of a
single pavilion, or a fixed venue, you have the possibility to
make an art-specific pavilion every time. On the other hand, each
cargo carries some characteristics with it. In this case, this
is welded wire mesh, but some other time it could be earth. Each
time the cargo/load will become a form substance and can be
interpreted through its physical, chemical, or sensory
properties. The welded wire mesh can be interpreted through its
modular grid, its spacing, its specific density, the change of
specific weight, the wind it lets through... With all these
properties it has a potential to become space.

IT IS INTERESTING THAT THE PAVILION AS CARGO/LOAD WAS
NOT THE ONLY IDEA. AS FAR AS I KNOW, THE FIRST IDEAS
IN OUR MEETINGS EVEN DECLINED THIS ELEMENT OF LOAD IN
THE SENSE THAT THE BARGE WAS REGARDED AS A CORE OF A
CAVE THAT DELINEATED CERTAIN TERRITORY.

I think that we were all into this because we were intrigued by
the process that included fourteen people and in whose course
things radically changed. In design, it is always important to
make a certain step in order to be able to make the next one.
This does not mean that at that moment you have to freeze your
thought, but this emerging idea certainly helps you to construct
the next, sometimes even continually, sometimes as a thesis –
antithesis, depending on the situation.

TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE PROJECT FORMED BY SOME INITIAL
NARRATIVE INCENTIVES, LIKE LOSING THE EXHIBITION VENUE
AFTER THE DISINTEGRATION OF YUGOSLAVIA OR EVEN THE WIDELY
ACCEPTED MYTH THAT VENICE WAS BUILT ON CROATIAN OAK.

THERE ARE NOT SO MANY OTHER PROFESSIONS AND DISCIPLINES THAT

HOW MUCH OF THAT WAS BUILT INTO THE PROJECT?

This is where the danger was that the project might become some
kind of lamentation, which we wanted to avoid by all means. We
were rather interested in the aspect of heterotopia, because that
de-territorialisation also creates a special place. I
personally found much more interesting the possibility that the
forming of the pavilion on an unstable base like a barge might
alter the attitude to exhibiting for all participating countries.
Can we imagine the lagoons of Venice featuring an entire urbanism
of barges? And also, why should this exhibition remain bound to
Venetian islands and the Giardini, why could we not change that
as well?

MAYBE HERE WE ARE TALKING ABOUT SEVERAL PARADOXES.
IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT THE INTENTION OF BUILDING A REAL
STRUCTURE WAS FAVOURED, BECAUSE IT SEEMED CONTRADICTORY
TO SPEAK ABOUT THE LACK OF SPACE AND DISPLAY MODELS AT
A PARTICULAR VENUE. THE CURRENT PARADOX IS, HOWEVER, THAT
YOU HAVE A PROJECT WHICH REMAINS CONCEPTUAL IN A CERTAIN
SENSE, ALTHOUGH ITS CORE IS A FINISHED STRUCTURE.

That is right, but contradictions create ambivalence and multiple
meanings. That which we are doing now, I rather see as a
blueprint. I see it as an art-specific pavilion that changes in
accordance with the building substance appointed by the barge.
I also see re-use potential and a possibility to utilize thus
formed pavilions again, creating a small urbanism.

HOW DID YOU REACH THE IDEA OF WELDED WIRE MESH?
There was really not much pre-meditation; it was rather a genesis
of a concept. As a grid, a cage appeared in the design process,
at a certain point this grid took on a form substance and can be
interpreted through its sense of a surrogate, but as a kind of analogy to architecture and
modularity, not because of welded wire mesh being a constituent
part of reinforced concrete, but because from this simple pattern
– however primitive, generated by welding – certain analogies
with New Tendencies, EXAT, and other interesting occurrences
could be drawn.

HOW DID THOSE REFERENCES AND ANALOGIES EMERGE IN THE
PROCESS, SUBSEQUENTLY, PREVIOUSLY...?
References always emerge afterwards. Each artwork, even the
architectural one, is justified by a reconstruction of its
genealogy; not in advance, but later. When you make something
once, then you interpret what you have created. The origin of
this can be sub-consciousness or intuition, but when you later
on look back and reconstruct, you can discover an entire mental
pattern within which this can logically be placed. In that way
you are sure that the idea is anchored, enabling you that
something new emerges from it. At any case, a previously set
referential framework didn’t actually exist.

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT SOME CHILDISH PLAYFULNESS WAS ALSO
AT WORK DURING THE JOINT REFLECTION ON AND TESTING OF
IDEAS. WHAT WAS ITS DRIVING FORCE?
There are not so many other professions and disciplines that

THROUGH PREVIOUS INTERVIEWS, IN THE OPINION OF THE
PROJECT PARTICIPANTS SOME NOTIONS HAVE EMERGED AS
IMPORTANT AND INSPIRING, I'D LIKE TO TALK FOR A MOMENT
MOSTLY ABOUT THE NOTION OF INSTABILITY IN RELATION
TO SPACE, CONCEPT, AND PERSPECTIVES, BUT ALSO TO THE
STRUCTURE ON THE BARGE. WHAT WERE YOUR POINTS OF
DEPARTURE?

How did those referencess and analogies emerge? In the
process, what was the driving for? In our opinion, the
architects and designers did not refer to any specific
framework didn’t actually exist.

There are not so many other professions and disciplines that

MAYBE HERE WE ARE TALKING ABOUT SEVERAL PARADOXES.
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blueprint. I see it as an art-specific pavilion that changes in
accordance with the building substance appointed by the barge.
I also see re-use potential and a possibility to utilize thus
formed pavilions again, creating a small urbanism.

HOW DID YOU REACH THE IDEA OF WELDED WIRE MESH?
There was really not much pre-meditation; it was rather a genesis
of a concept. As a grid, a cage appeared in the design process,
at a certain point this grid took on a form substance and can be
interpreted through its sense of a surrogate, but as a kind of analogy to architecture and
modularity, not because of welded wire mesh being a constituent
part of reinforced concrete, but because from this simple pattern
– however primitive, generated by welding – certain analogies
with New Tendencies, EXAT, and other interesting occurrences
could be drawn.

HOW DID THOSE REFERENCES AND ANALOGIES EMERGE IN THE
PROCESS, SUBSEQUENTLY, PREVIOUSLY...?
References always emerge afterwards. Each artwork, even the
architectural one, is justified by a reconstruction of its
genealogy; not in advance, but later. When you make something
once, then you interpret what you have created. The origin of
this can be sub-consciousness or intuition, but when you later
on look back and reconstruct, you can discover an entire mental
pattern within which this can logically be placed. In that way
you are sure that the idea is anchored, enabling you that
something new emerges from it. At any case, a previously set
referential framework didn’t actually exist.
have retained ideals. Such is architecture, maybe because it is connected with creation. Secondly, it has its certain anchor point. In architecture, the effort is always collective; you are surrounded by a large number of people, who out of your desired 100 per cent always produce less, so that you continuously struggle to preserve those 100 per cent. Things have a childish form, which enables you to create and see things innocently and naively. I hate the adjective “playful”, because I do not think architecture is a game; however, it has to be something aleatoric, because when you create, you keep turning your brain in all directions - like in Alice in Wonderland.

ONE OF THE CONTEXTS YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO PLAY WITH IS THE BIENNALE’S TOPIC, SET BY THE ARCHITECT KAZUYO SEJIMA. HOW FAR DID THE THINKING GO IN THE DIRECTION OF GIVING AN ANSWER TO IT AND CAN A PART OF YOUR CONCEPT BE RELEVANT AS THIS ANSWER?

I would say that her topic had very little influence, but I think that each topic set at the Biennale is always one of the notions that define architecture in the way that good architecture also contains that notion. In that sense the Croatian pavilion on the barge as a generic term also encompasses the term set by Sejima.

CAN WE, AND TO WHAT EXTENT, SAY THAT SUCH A PROJECT COMMUNICATES A COMMENT ON THE CURRENT MOMENT IN ARCHITECTURE?

Yes, on several levels. The first level is defending the star system, because it is about abolishing vanity. The second is that with a low budget you can create a valuable space with pronounced characteristics. In architecture, manipulation with personal perception is always questionably - the question is how, with such cheap building substance, accessible to everybody, relocate the viewer into a new world everywhere everything will fall short of his expectations; they will be altered or an unexpected experience will be made possible. At the beginning we had certain ambitions that we lost on the way. In the whole process it was important to discard such superfluities and to reach the true substance.

15 CONCLUSIONS / CAPTIONS TO DIAGRAM #6

1. SASA BEGVOČIĆ: "The idea about the pavilion. This unusual spatial solution illu

2. MARKO DABROVIĆ: "It is amazing how reali

3. JORI FRAN: "In the end we are not interested in structures and words like barge, house, pavilion, ship, space... but have a problem solving - the question is how a creative mutant that emerged from a synergy of a vast variety of differences and circumstances through improvisation, understanding, and tolerance of different approaches."

4. TAILA GROSSU: "I did not believe that we would find a way out of this, out of that thing: too many people, too many possibilities, directions, variations. Something went through a process of purification, of losing and finding... What happened in the end is raw, strong, tender, translucent, fatal, real, unreal Steel Nebula..."

5. PETAR MOLČANOV: "Steel Nebula is the ratio of built-in material to the volume of the completed 9 LeA peLIvAN: "Expressions of the project, which does not serve anything; the dialogue with their pavilion and everything /pavilions and that among them one would be selected as the future Croatian pavilion. But the group of invited authors agreed by consensus that they would make a joint project instead of the initially conceived competition of small barges."

The result of this work and the decision that the barge is not finished floating pavilion, but that every year it should carry a different load, which would bring the idea of dialogue to affirmation on the one hand between architecture and the presentation in the installation and on the other between the public at the international exhibition and the floating installation. It should also bring the idea of a floating pavilion to recognition by presenting the first cargo/load barge.

An essential part of this decision is that the barge would include an opera barge, which fulfills its everyday tasks throughout the majority of the year. The experience of work in a group has also shown that the idea of consensus is not operational and that we should speak of dialogue as the key word of the project, which does not proceed automatically from the description of functions. This is topography of airflow, of specific density,胰岛素 and sharp cuts. This is a confrontation with the world of other productions of welded wire mesh in action."

In architecture the effort is always collective; you are surrounded by a large number of people, who out of your desired 100 per cent always produce less, so that you continuously struggle to preserve those 100 per cent. Things have a childish form, which enables you to create and see things innocently and naively. I hate the adjective “playful”, because I do not think architecture is a game; however, it has to be something aleatoric, because when you create, you keep turning your brain in all directions - like in Alice in Wonderland.
Diagram #6
And finally (about August 1st, 2010)
The unbearable lightness of 33.9 t

Korčula, Island of Korčula
Jelsa, Island of Hvar
Jelsa, Island of Hvar
Rijeka
Split, Tivat
Boston, New York, (U.S.A)

Podgora
Dubrovnik
London, Manchester, (U.K.)
Split

Njivice, Island of Krk
Jadranovo
Dubrovnik
Rijeka
WELDED WIRE MESH LAYERS

+0.15m -> +6.45m

Diagram showing various layers at different elevations.