



La Biennale di Venezia

Arte
Architettura
Cinema
Danza
Musica
Teatro
Archivio Storico

How
will we
live
together?

Rafael Moneo

GOLDEN LION FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

**BIENNALE
ARCHITETTURA
2021**

22.05-21.11
VENEZIA
GIARDINI Book Pavilion



ROLEX

VENICE 1991 | 2021

In 1991 Paolo Portoghesi's role as President of La Biennale di Venezia coincided with Francesco Dal Co's Directorship of the Architecture Department, thus leading to the wide-ranging and ambitious program of the 5th International Architecture Exhibition, the aim of which was to help architecture regain its lost prominence in the city. And so, as an added incentive to the architecture exhibitions at the Giardini of La Biennale, three competitions were organized that sought not only to energize the content of the Exhibition but also to contribute to solving specific, if not endemic, problems of La Biennale and Venice.

The first such competition was the reconstruction of the Central Pavilion (formerly the Italian Pavilion) at the Giardini, seen as an occasion for Italian architects to give free rein to interpret what had been a heated academic debate in previous years. To this end, twelve Italian architects were invited to compete (Alessandro Anselmi, Vittorio De Feo, Roberto Gabetti and Aimaro Isola, Giorgio Grassi, Gianugo Polesello, Franco Cellini, Vittorio Gregotti, Franco Purini, Adolfo Natalini, Guido Canella, Francesco Venezia, and Pierluigi Nicolini). The winning project was Cellini's, which, albeit enthusiastically declared winner, was never carried out.

The second competition, which was much more international in scope, asked architects to find a solution to a problem that the call for the competition referred to as "urgent" as it intended to provide the city with a new access area—*Una porta per Venezia* (A doorway to Venice) was its motto—through the creation of a *piazzale* that would combine rail and road access to city. This competition was won by the English architects Edward Jones and Jeremy Dixon.

The third and last of these competitions was for the construction of a new Palazzo del Cinema on the Lido that would provide an appropriate setting for the Venice International Film Festival. It was decided that this competition would be invitational, and the architects Carlo Aymonino, Mario Botta, Sverre Fehn, Marlies Hentrup / Norbert Heyers / James Stirling, Steven Holl, Fumihiko Maki, Rafael Moneo, Jean Nouvel, Aldo Rossi, and Oswald M Ungers were invited to compete. The architects Santiago Calatrava, Frank Gehry, and Álvaro Siza were also invited but opted not to participate. I was fortunate that my project was chosen by a jury that included Kurt Foster, Arata Isozaki, Gianluigi Rondi, Manfredo Tafuri, and the President Francesco Dal Co.

Those in charge of the Exhibition, aware of the status and reputation of this particular five-member jury, commissioned Aldo Rossi, after the success of his Teatro del Mondo, to build a new gateway to the Arsenale and Massimo Scolari to create a gigantic Winged Victory to accompany it, while James Stirling was commissioned to build a bookstore pavilion in the Giardini that would become, by offering books and texts, a point of dissemination for architectural debate of the last few decades. Thanks to Electa's patronage, the bookstore pavilion was built; unfortunately, the same cannot be said for Rossi's gateway and Scolari's *Vittoria Alata*. Today, this pavilion is the only testament to that ambitious 5th International Architecture Exhibition of 1991.

Thanks to the kind and generous decision of Hashim Sarkis, current Curator of the Biennale Architettura 2021, to use Stirling's Book Pavilion as a setting for the exhibition of my work, I thought that it would perhaps make sense to present my projects for Venice, Cannaregio, Campo di Marte, and the Palazzo del Cinema, accompanied by several other works from those years, making use of the shelves that configure the perimeter of the Book Pavilion with images of my work.

As a result, visitors are afforded a view of our entry for the Palazzo del Cinema and the Book Pavilion, the first as a document of the Biennale Architettura 1991 and the second as a built testimony to just how ambitious the Biennale Architettura was thirty years ago.

CANNAREGIO

Following a meeting in New York in the fall of 1977 between the IUAV faculty (Aymonino, Rossi, Pastor, Polesello, Semerani) and the IAUS and The Cooper Union (Eisenman, Hejduk, Hoesli, Abraham), a seminar was held in Venice in the summer of 1978 that led to an exhibition at the Museo Correr and the book *Dieci immagini per Venezia*.

Venice has been, in terms of the history of Western architecture, the city that has most faithfully reflected its culture. Designing a fictitious project had obvious appeal for architects, particularly in the wake of the studies on Venice in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The Cannaregio project was, in this case, in the very heart of the city, a tight network of *calli* and waterways. I decided to limit the project by fragmenting the Cannaregio area by means of a new canal, thus defining an area large enough to give rise to an architecture with a life of its own “in / within” the aforementioned area.

Discontinuity and rupture are accepted premises to our project, thus explaining the value interstitial spaces are given in the project: they are entrusted to meet up with what has already been built. The built, therefore, is integrated into its context without any qualms, accepting that it is a new construction, heedless of continuity both spatial and temporal. Accepting these premises does not imply forgetting or disregarding formal constants, according to which the city was being built in the past.

With the risk that observations like this always have, I would like to posit that Venice is a horizontal city par excellence, as the continuous presence of water suggests, whose origins were determined by the layout of the canals and waterways—I will not say random, but often uncontrolled, defined by what was the formation of the mainland. Taking this plan as a starting point, the vertical plane appears to define volumes and façades, always claiming their autonomy and frontality.

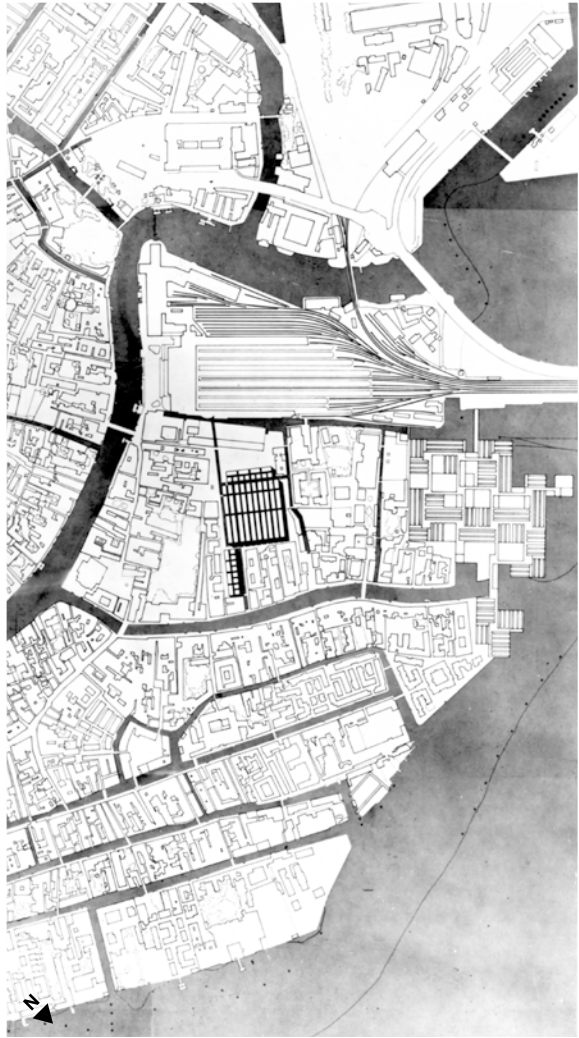
And that is why our proposal derives from the urban plan, making use of an architecture of elementary solids that is alien to the area on which it is set, without it being possible to interpret its geometry as a connective tissue capable of filling any void.

The superposition of the system of streets and waterways comes to the fore once again. It is this system of solids that characterizes the city’s architecture. The absolute congruence between these idiosyncratic routes is manifested in it. The unitary condition of the urban fabric can be seen in the precise contours that distinguish it from what already exists and that leads us to insist again on how much continuity with the old city is entrusted to the interstitial spaces. The layout structure cannot be described as generic due to its own unique features, translated into architecture by establishing distances and measurements. If measurement has always been a key issue for architecture, in the case of Venice it is even more germane, since the city’s peculiarity, the constant presence of water, means that dimensions are perceived differently, both in terms of distances, by increasing them, and by the effect of reflected light that eliminates much of the shadows.

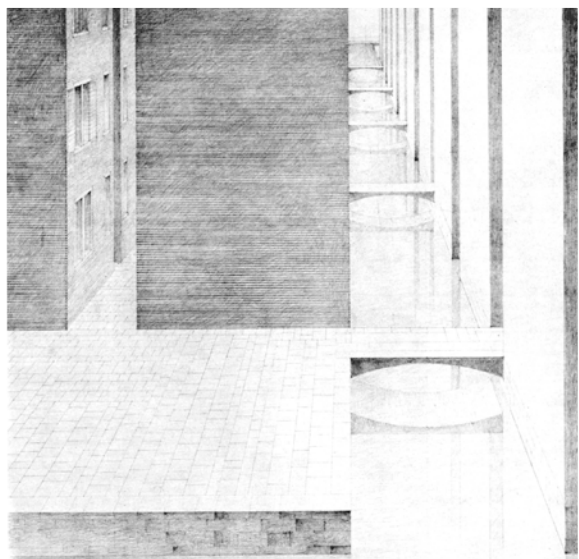
The condition of an immense unitary construction that we attribute to Venice moves without any mediation from public to private space. This led us to opt, in typological terms, for individual dwellings and not collective housing blocks. An elementary wall system qualifies the space, which we interpreted and proposed as being available for the most diverse uses.

Reference

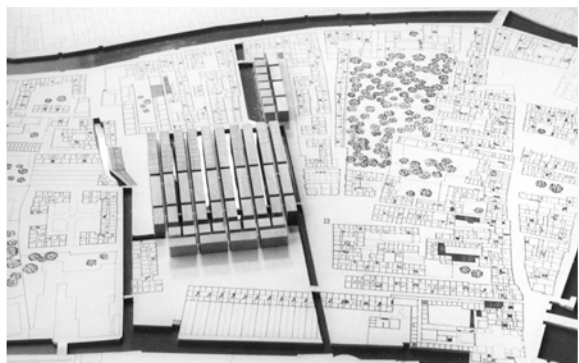
Dal Co, F. (1978) “10 Immagini per Venezia”.



Site plan



Perspective



Model view

CAMPO DI MARTE

In 1985, the IACP (Istituto Autonomo Case Popolari) organized a restricted competition for 850 homes in what Vittorio Gregotti called the “inner periphery” of Venice on the grounds of the old Campo di Marte. The architects who participated in the competition were Alvaro Siza, Aldo Rossi, Carlo Aymonino, Rafael Moneo, Mario Botta, Boris Podrecca, Tomasz Mankowski and Krzysztof Bojanowski, Aldo and Hannie van Eyck, James Gowan, and Gianfranco Caniggia.

The Campo di Marte area project was an opportunity for me to reflect once more on how to build in Venice after the aforementioned project experience at Cannaregio. The theoretical hypothesis raised then was now a much more precise reality, both in terms of the program and in terms of the urban context. The notable differences between the Giudecca and Cannaregio areas still allow for the city of Venice to emerge as the protagonist.

However, considering both, one thing is immediately apparent, and that is the very different articulation of the two sites. The irregularity of the perimeter in the Cannaregio area contrasts with the regularity of the Campo di Marte. This led us to make an urban proposal that was less characterized by the irregularity of the site, since the geometry of the perimeter freed us from the problems that might derive from “infilling”: the regularity of the spaces available and the modesty of the building environment offered a greater possibility of advancing a proposal that was not strongly conditioned by the specificity of the context.

There were two possible alternatives that we considered: the intense occupation of the land that a scheme of individual residences would lead to or a concentration in blocks for collective housing. We opted for the first, making the plan the matrix of the project: the definition of the structure of the layout—two-dimensional, flat like Venice—thus became the main project operation. The layout was transformed into meshes capable of supporting differentiated readings and made it possible to fill the void resulting from the demolition of the existing buildings, affording a certain autonomy to the two plots ensuing from the aforementioned demolitions. The fact that the two plots were displaced gave them a certain independence, having made use of the imprecise condition of the virtual center to establish a bond between the two, occupying it with an image of Saint Mark’s Lion which both plots assume without establishing hierarchies.

Fundamental for us was also the congruence between the urban layout and the living unit. Indeed, the structure of the layout coincided with the wall system, having entrusted the continuity between the shape of the city and the houses to this congruence. One facet that also became apparent, as was the case in the Cannaregio area, was our attributing the condition of an “immense building” to the city of Venice. We wanted the construction in Campo di Marte to be experienced as the common home of its inhabitants. The structure of the route facilitated this purpose by making independent access to all homes possible through the dense network of *calli* and passageways.

Carlo Trevisan, president of the IACP, wrote that Siza Vieira’s proposal stood out from the others precisely because of its great feasibility, adding, immediately afterwards, that Carlo Aymonino, Rafael Moneo, and Aldo Rossi were appointed by the jury to jointly elaborate the final project with the winning architect.

Reference

Carlo Magnani. “Il Concorso dello IACP di Venezia per Campo di Marte alla Giudecca,” *Casabella* 518 (November, 1985), 4–21.



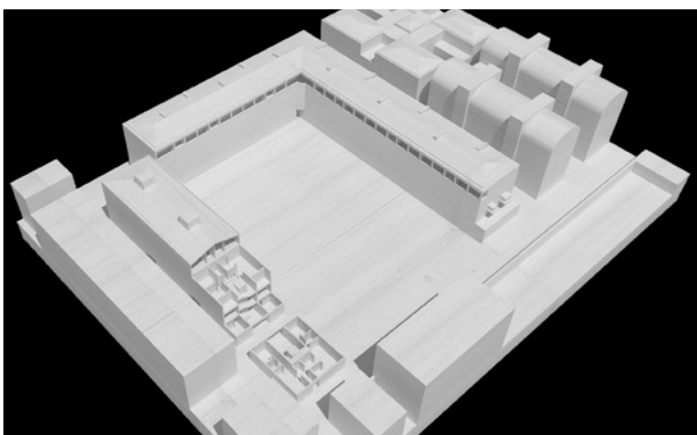
Moneo competition entry (1st phase)



Urban scheme by Alvaro Siza (winner of 1st phase)



Housing proposal Moneo (2nd phase)



Model of proposal by Moneo, Siza, Rossi y Aymonino

PALAZZO DEL CINEMA

The projected Palazzo del Cinema looks towards Venice, celebrating the irresistible appeal of this ever-enigmatic city. The large, suspended canopy will welcome the international film community arriving at the Lido from Venice, providing shelter for boats and vaporetto arriving to the Venice International Film Festival of La Biennale di Venezia. The canopy not only fulfils this role but also offers Venice a memorable and exceptional backdrop, proposing an animated terrace overlooking Venice, extending the space of the indoor bar/cafe. Although distant from Venice, I would like this building to have the attributes of a Venetian *palazzo*, and the continuous awareness of Venice's mysterious presence.

We should emphasize that the Palazzo del Cinema is a meeting place, a point of encounters, and a marketplace. A protective canopy shelters people from the boat mooring to the building. The space is dominated by a lobby/courtyard, adjacent to the larger cinema, the bookshop and a small cafe. It is the core of the building. The restaurant, the access to the small cinemas, and the offices all open up onto this courtyard which animates the social life of the festival. As we move into the building we are offered a wide colonnade where the producers' stands will be placed.

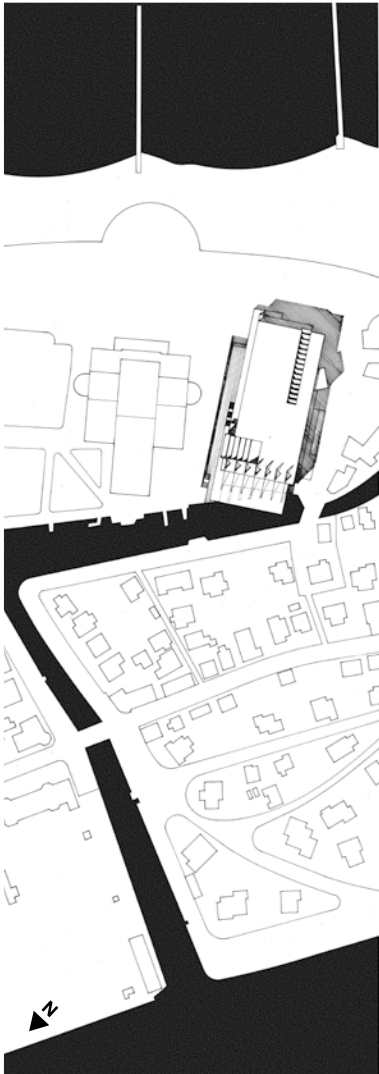
The larger cinema, with seating for 1,800 people, is paired together with the medium sized cinema, with seating for 1,200 people. Like islands, they float in the space and are accessible from all around. By virtue of this dichotomy, we want to recognize the importance of the other access, the Lido façade. But it should also be said that the Lido entry is also designed to eschew a frontal reading of the building: the Hotel Excelsior is pre-eminent and respects the necessary distance between the Palazzo del Cinema and the Casino.

The cinemas have been designed according to well known types. The presence of the screen explains the order of the space. The contiguity of both cinemas allows for a common backstage. Despite this contiguity, the section clearly shows the differences between the two. The larger one, with access from the lobby, is completed by a balcony. The medium sized cinema is more contained in its round geometry. I imagine it with a more fragmented ceiling able to create a grotto-like atmosphere. It does not have a balcony, but a ribbon window in the back will allow passers-by to glimpse into the space as the film proceeds. The sections clearly show that both cinemas have access from the lower level.

The Palazzo del Cinema is a bold and compact building. The difficulties of the site are better solved through a strong volumetric statement. Emphasis given to the access from Venice helps to dissolve what is, in our opinion, an undesirable symmetry. The building's longitudinal structure reveals the dual condition of the site, and the Lido access establishes an efficient balance. We envision this crisp, sharp, direct volume with a stone texture. Despite the difficulties that the use of stone provides today, we believe that a sound mixture of concrete structure and highly colored Italian stone will provide the right character for such a building. Naturally, the construction of the canopy platform should be treated with special care, both for the sake of its functional role as well as because of the iconographic importance that it has in defining the image of the building.

Reference:

Paolo Portoghesi. *Quinta Mostra Internazionale di Architettura / Concorso internazionale per il nuovo Palazzo del Cinema al Lido di Venezia*. Milano, Electa, 1991.



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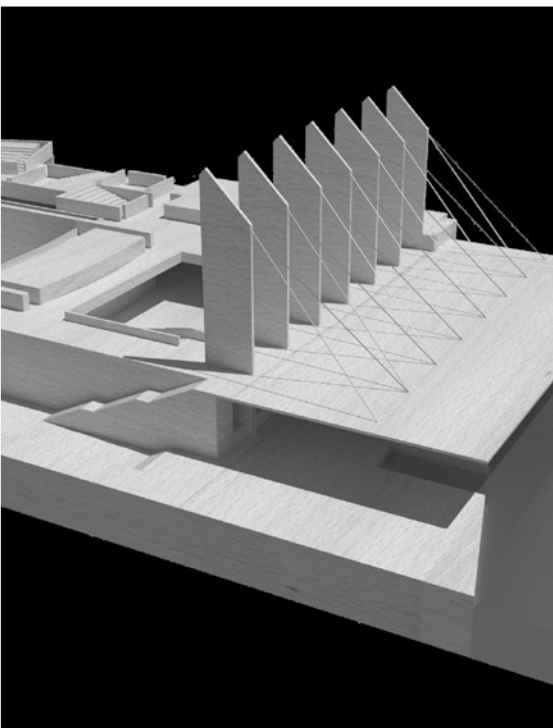
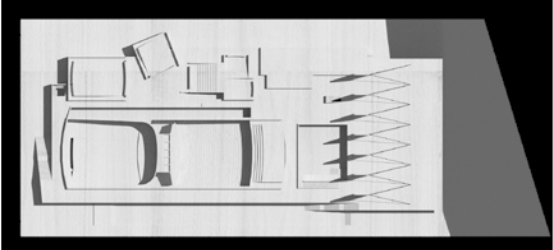
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Concourse winner proposal



Model view



Diestre Factory, 1964
Zaragoza, Spain



Plaza de Toros, 1966-1967
Pamplona, Spain



Urumea building, 1969-1973
with Marquet, Unzurrunzaga, and Zulaica
San Sebastián, Spain



Bankinter headquarters, 1972-1981
with Ramón Bescós
Madrid, Spain



Logroño City Hall, 1973-1981
Logroño, Spain



National Museum of Roman Art, 1980-1986
Mérida, Spain



Previsión Española, 1982-1988
Sevilla, Spain



Atocha Station, 1984-1992
Madrid, Spain



L'Illa Diagonal, 1987-1994
with Manuel de Solà-Morales
Barcelona, Spain



Pilar i Joan Miró Foundation, 1987-1992
Palma de Mallorca, Spain



Auditorium and Music Center, 1988-1999
Barcelona, Spain



Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, 1989-1992
Madrid, Spain



Davis Center Wellesley College, 1989-1993
Wellesley, USA



Kursaal Convention Center and Auditorium, 1990-1999
San Sebastián, Spain



Murcia City Hall extension, 1991-1999
Murcia, Spain



Modernamuseet, 1991-1998
with Moneo Brock
Stockholm, Sweden



Chivite Winery, 1991-2002
Arínzano, Spain



Audrey Jones Beck Building MFAH, 1992-2000
Houston, USA



Potsdamerplatz Hyatt Hotel, 1993-1998
Berlin, Germany



Spanish Ambassador's Residence, 1995-2002
with Moneo Brock
Washington D.C., USA





Royal Archive of Navarra, 1995-2003
Pamplona, Spain



Beirut Souks, 1996-2010
Beirut, Lebanon



Our Lady of the Angels Cathedral, 1996-2002
Los Angeles, USA



Cranbrook Academy, 1997-2002
with Moneo Brock
Detroit, USA



Hospital Gregorio Marañón, 1997-2003
with José María de la Mata
Madrid, Spain



Prado Museum Extension, 1995-2003
Madrid, Spain



Chace Center RISD, 2000-2008
with Hayden Salter
Providence, USA



Fundación Beulas, 1999-2003
Huesca, Spain



LISE Harvard University, 2000-2007
Cambridge, USA



Library University of Deusto, 2001-2008
Bilbao, Spain



Civic Center Aragonia, 2000-2010
Zaragoza, Spain



Miradero-Safont Convention Center, 2000-2011
Toledo, Spain



Parish Church Riberas del Loiola, 2001-2011
San Sebastián, Spain



Novartis Laboratories, 2005-2008
with Hayden Salter
Basel, Switzerland



Northwest Corner Building Columbia University, 2005-2009
with Moneo Brock
New York City, USA





**Peretz-Scully Hall and Neuroscience Institute, 2006-2014
Princeton, USA**



**Puig Tower, 2006-2014
with Lucho Marcial
Barcelona, Spain**



**Museum University of Navarra, 2009-2014
Pamplona, Spain**



**Edificio Schinkelplatz, 2013-2020
with Mathias Schütte
Berlin, Germany**



**Descendientes de J. Palacios Winery, 2013-2020
with Clara Moneo and Valerio Canals
Villafranca del Bierzo, Spain**