

The Venice Architecture Biennale, 2010 (II)

4Space

By Ioan Augustin

November 9, 2010

I was saying that this year's theme was "*People Meet in architecture*". The star was a 3D film, very Zen in itself, about a house made by SANAA, of which it is hard to say whether it is a topological processing of the site, a federation of public places, indoor and outdoor spaces, or an architectural object. The film must have been well deserved since SANAA had recently received the Pritzker Award for Architecture.

In fact, the whole curator exhibition at Arsenal was very Zen. At the entrance, we come across a sculpture loosely imitating Brancusi's manner: an egg of stone, at the core of which a cave-shelter was carved, where light was brought in through a variety of fragrant cedar furnaces. One part of the deal was the tactile experience of the house (suggesting, not quite transparently, the need for protection of all those left homeless after the earthquake in Chile) whereas another part of the deal was the very fact of smelling the cedar. Wonderful. Another plumbing functioned on layers of steam, alternating vertically, with complete transparency breaks, pierced by a spiral bridge that goes almost to the ceiling and then brings you across the room. The various air densities and the architectural tour bestowed upon the entire space a sense of, how should I put it, consistency. Further along, a chalice for holy water, one of those you can see at the entrance of Catholic churches, was lit up so that it would project a rainbow aura on the floor. Across the room was the workshop of a company from Mumbai, where they used only natural materials and traditional techniques and the architects conducted tests on replicas, studying all sorts of things ranging from miniature ladders to the real sized model of a certain object: solutions for roofs, windows, and walls. We were, undoubtedly, standing before a closely studied experiment, and not before a mere uncritical recurrence of tradition.



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My basic issue, since a few editions ago, is that this Biennale has almost ceased to represent the architecture of the host countries (with subtle and consistent exceptions, of which I always whole-heartedly remember Spain and Italy). Instead, we have installations in the building of which the architectural interest plays a minor role. It must be boring, for non-architects, to see only exhibitions of projects and house photos. But for architects, an upgrade twice a year - a retrospective report (or, why not, a report on future perspectives) on the current development of this field of activity - would be far more instructive, not to mention the educational benefit for many of the students struggling with the Faculty of Architecture.

Translated by: **Andrei Alecsa** and **Alexandra Negreanu**

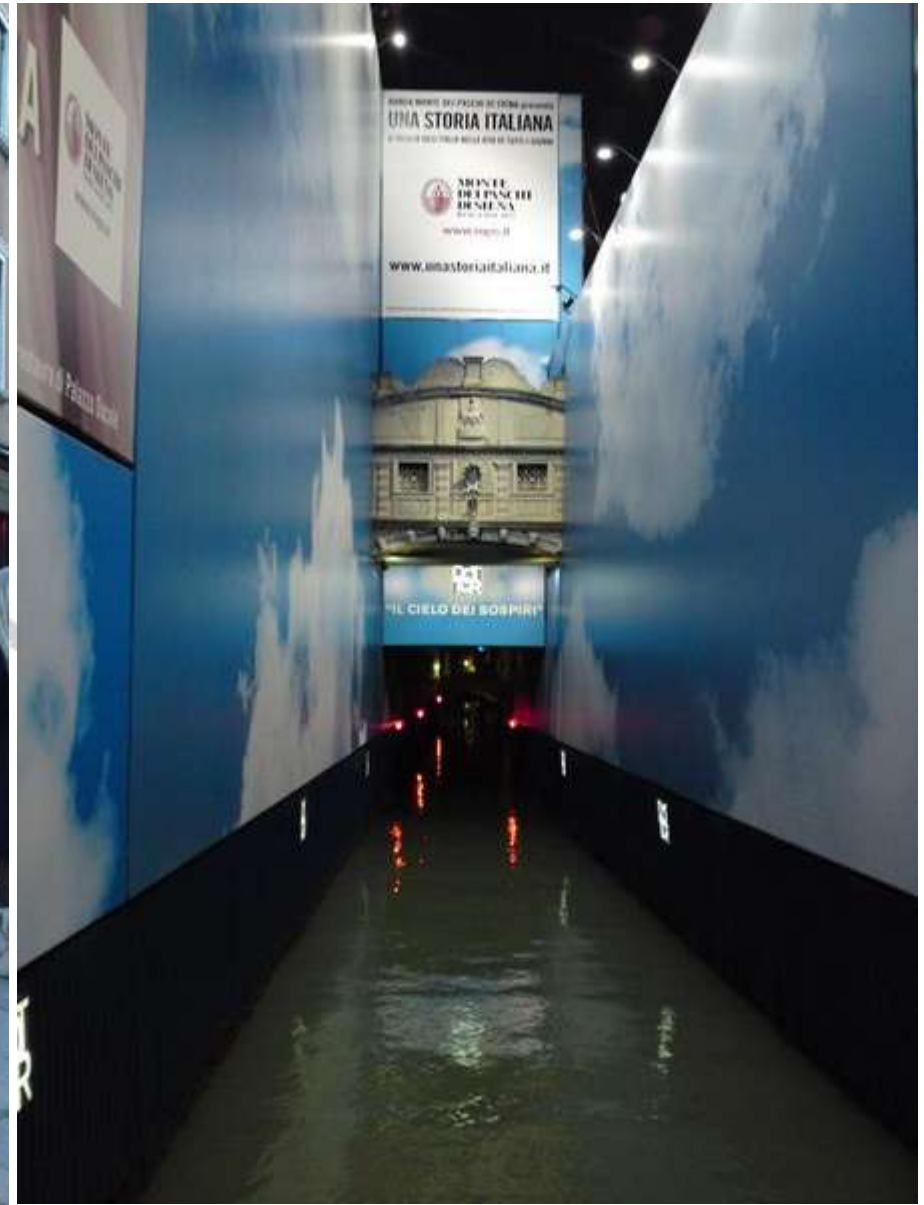
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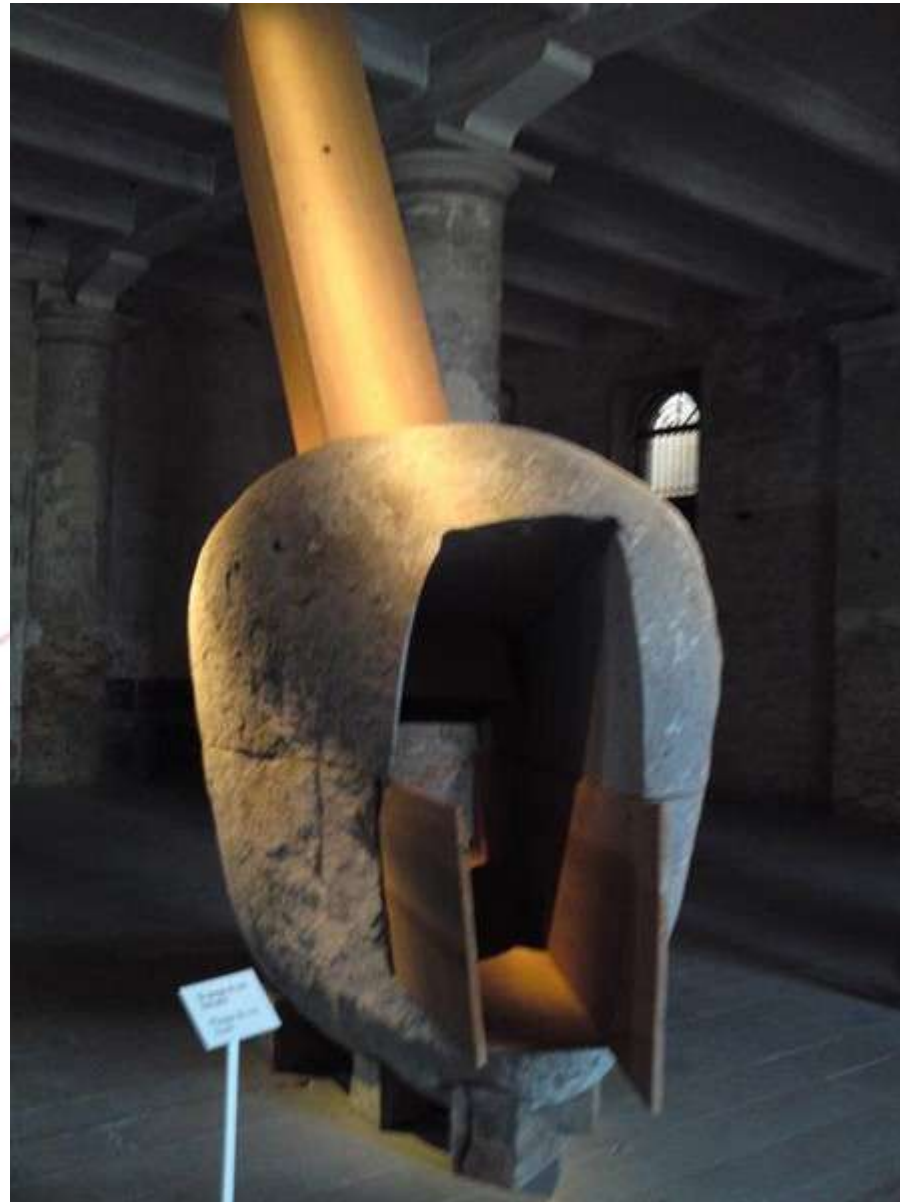


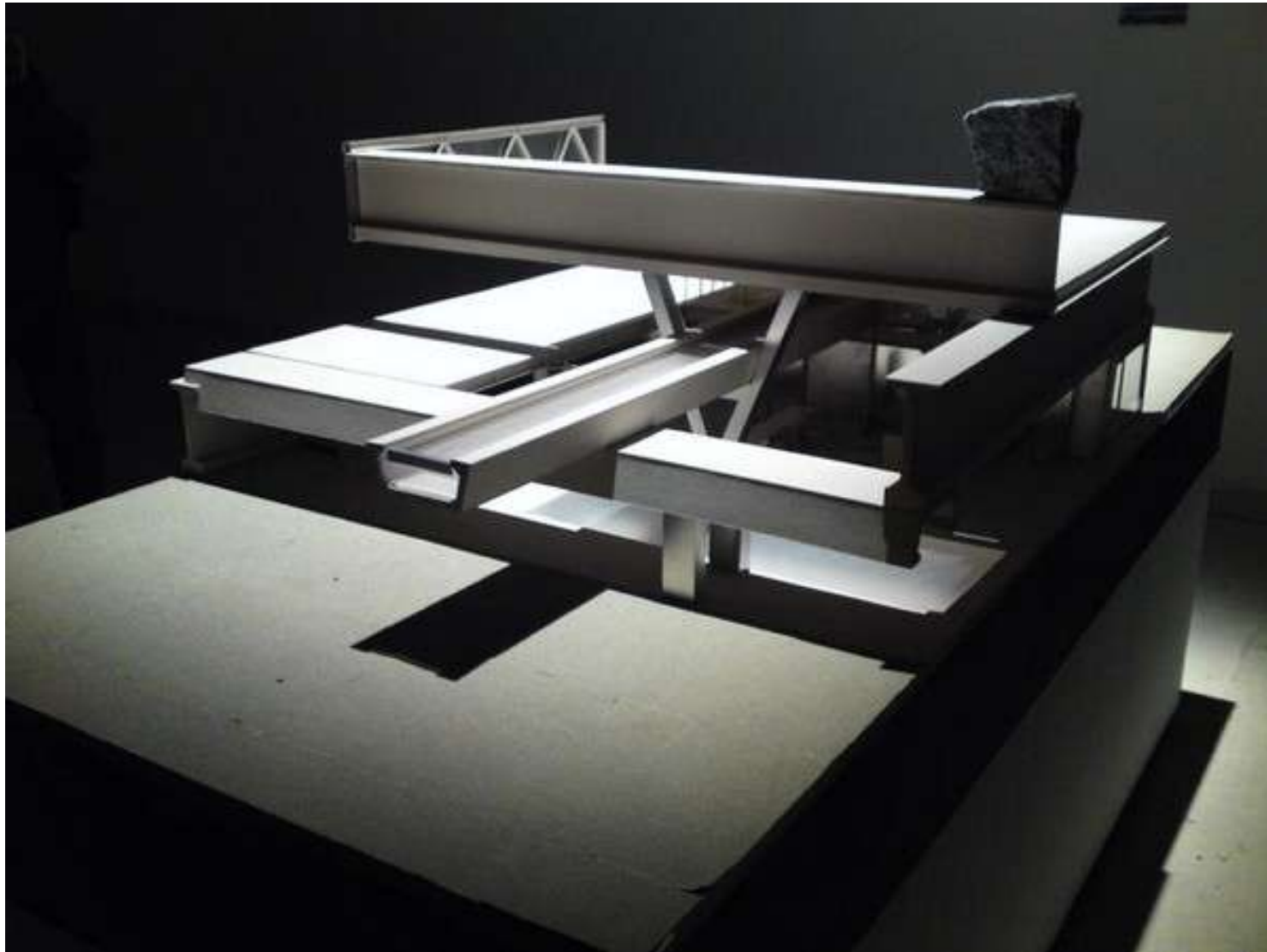
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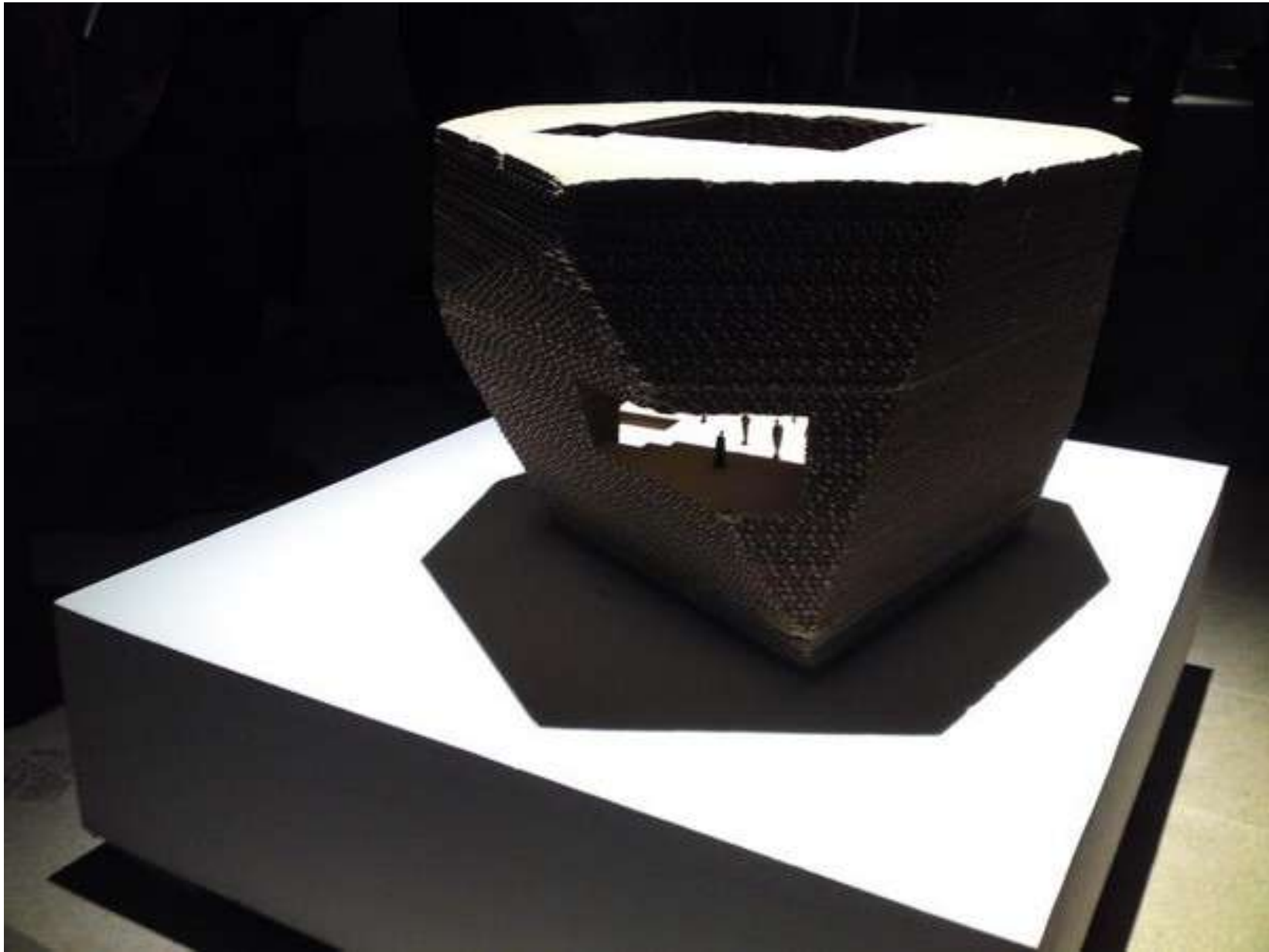


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