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In reality, however, the Biennale merely reflects the precariousness and ephemeral insubstantiality of a discipline – architecture – whose only response to the seriousness and unpredictability of changes – which in barely a quarter century have transformed the social geography of the planet – has been autistic wallowing in the abstract limbo of its own formalisations. For anyone who still believes that environmental conservation, energy saving, social conscience, psychological impact on new users in local communities, etc. are the imperatives that architecture is being called upon to address, the grand parade at the Corderie is merely a redundant projection of glittering images that seem to have lost all contact with hard reality, and lack even the ethical support of utopian escapism. As they file past in Asymptote's mediocre exhibit design – perhaps the clearest demonstration yet of the distance that separates the seductiveness of virtual reality from the checkmate of physical reality – a parade of shiny, shadowless buildings turns a pigout of images and models and images into an undifferentiated, iridescent blob, confirming the truth of McLuhan's celebrated dictum that the medium is the message. The aesthetics of accumulation inevitably forces world architecture into a single mould by presenting it as something inextricable and solid that irons out difference and obliterates contradiction. Which élites are the glittering concert halls in the Italy Pavilion intended to please? Who will visit all the museums, arts centres and leisure complexes whose space-ship designs, bloated serpentine coils and hanging floors are just the latest outcome of a never-ending search for special effects? In a world that has awoken from the euphoria of globalisation to find itself trapped in a nightmare of security threats and cultural conflict, which notion of social transformation seem likely to be addressed by the translucent walls, transparent screens and cellular membranes that this exhibition extols as the achievements of a new 21st-century sensibility? And what might be the most appropriate settings in today's world for the undulating, amoeba-like shapes of these "hyper-places" that seem to have come straight from paintings by Salvador Dali, the 20th century's most brilliant

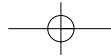
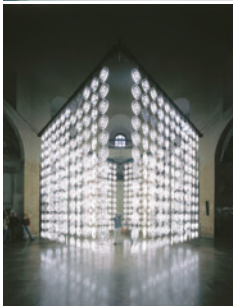
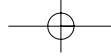


planimetria dei Giardini della Biennale/site plan of Biennale Gardens

Notizie dall'interno

M.G.Z. Finalmente l'Italia rientra in possesso almeno di parte del Padiglione Italia (non sarebbe forse tempo di recuperarlo come padiglione nazionale?) e lo fa con una sorta di leggera discrezione, da molti vista come un modo penalizzante, una rinuncia a opporsi all'ormai cronica assenza di progetti italiani in Biennale, un'incapacità a sostenere le (seppur poche) realizzazioni e a mettere in luce i lavori dei giovani progettisti, in crescita forte per qualità e quantità. Ma queste "Notizie dall'interno: note sull'Italia del 2004" possono piuttosto essere lette come l'intelligente desiderio di focalizzare l'attenzione sull'importanza dell'architettura degli interni, una disciplina che trova nella storia stessa dell'architettura italiana matrici di alta qualità (da Portaluppi a Ponti a Sottsass...). Come il ritratto di un paese dove (secondo le parole di Mirko Zardini, curatore della sezione) "dietro le facciate apparentemente immutate percepiamo un rumore di fondo costante. [...] Un incessante lavoro di modifica dei nostri spazi abitati [...] Un riflesso dei nostri modi di vita [...]". In un racconto che, introdotto dalle "Storie di oggetti" – messe in scena con la consueta capacità poetica da Marco Ferreri – e dagli "Interni italiani" (ritratti da Paolo Rosselli), affronta luoghi diversi, perché "analizzando 24 ore di una tipica giornata italiana scopriremmo che oggi nulla si svolge più nei luoghi predisposti [...]". Una scelta che permette di affrontare, oltre al progetto domestico e a quello per i luoghi pubblici, il sempre interessante tema degli allestimenti. Ma che per contro lascia in un certo senso delusi, perché al di là della scelta dei progetti (che ci trova in larga misura partecipi), testimonia ancora una volta la grande difficoltà di parlare

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- **Sopra:** nel Padiglione Italia (Giardini della Biennale), "Storie di oggetti" di Marco Ferreri e Paolo Anghilleri, e, a parete, "Interni italiani" di Paolo Rosselli, nella sezione "Notizie dall'interno" a cura di Mirko Zardini.
- **Above:** in the Italian Pavilion (Biennale Gardens), "Stories of objects" by Marco Ferreri and Paolo Anghilleri, and, on the wall, "Italian interiors" by Paolo Rosselli, in the "Home News" section curated by Mirko Zardini.

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histrionic "metamorphist" before his time? In short, one would have expected something more problematic – and problem-fraught – from a survey as authoritative and international as the Venice Biennale, something more consonant with the dramatic complexity of the times we live in. The obvious risk is that visitors will end up thinking that architecture's great expectations are the latest brainwaves of celebrities like Libeskind, Gehry and Greg Lynn, rather than the achievement of social justice and cultural integration, capitalising the problematic heritage of historic towns cities, and getting the territorial balance between towns and country right. Once again, the transformations this exhibition talks about boil down to questions of form, cursorily dismissing the social frictions and resistance implicit in change. Models, photographs and drawings explain how the grammar and syntax of building construction are changing, but there is nothing at all about the social changes that these new forms are supposed to be a response to. The spotlights that play on upsets in the aesthetics of space cast cones of shade on the city, paradoxically the only thing that is truly noticeable by its absence in everything the Biennale has to say about architectural transformation. The previous Biennale – "Next" – isolated the buildings of the future in an objective, laboratory-like space, but "Metamorph" has done nothing to reposition the sights as one would have wished. On the contrary, by choosing only those projects that support its curator's ideas, the Biennale has only confirmed the suspicion that transformation glitz is a way of giving the vested interests of world neo-capitalism an attractive and acceptable face: that of an architecture whose opulence is what truly establishes the thresholds between different levels of "poverty" and expresses the pride-in-know-how of the world's dominant, technology-based cultures that excludes any hint of "marginality" and negative criticism from its field of action. F.I.

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di architettura: possono due fotografie (seppur accuratamente allestite) illustrare un iter progettuale? Restiamo soddisfatti da una velocissima panoramica di uno stato di fatto o vorremmo piuttosto disporre di strumenti che permettano di approfondire il progetto?

News from the interior. Italy at last claims back at least part of the Italian Pavilion (isn't it time it was reinstated as a national pavilion?) and does so with a kind of light-handed discretion that has been seen by many as a penalisation, a refusal to oppose the now chronic absence of Italian projects at the Biennale, an inability to support the (albeit few) creations or to highlight the work of young designers, who are increasing in number and quality. But this "News from the interior: notes on Italy in 2004" could instead be read as a clever wish to focus attention on the importance of interior architecture, a discipline that finds high-quality derivations in the history of Italian architecture itself (from Portulupi and Ponti to Sottsass...). Like the portrait of a country in which (to quote Mirko Zardini, curator of this section) "behind the apparently unchanged façades we detect a constant background noise. [...] Unceasing efforts to change the spaces we live in [...] A reflection of our lifestyles [...]". In an account which, preceded by "Stories of objects" – put together in customary poetic fashion by Marco Ferreri – and by "Italian interiors" (portrayed by Paolo Rosselli), it addresses a range of different places, because "if we analyse 24 hours in a typical Italian day we discover that today nothing happens where it was originally supposed to any more [...]". A choice that offers an opportunity to address not only the design of homes and public places but also the ever interesting subject of exhibition design. On the other hand it leaves you with a sense of disappointment because, leaving aside the actual choice of designs (which generally speaking we agree with), it once again exposes the great difficulty in talking about architecture: can two photographs (however carefully displayed) illustrate a design process? Are we to feel satisfied with a rapid overview of the way things stand or would we rather be given the tools that offer to us a deeper insight into the design? **M.G.Z.**

"Notizie dall'interno: note sull'Italia del 2004", a cura di/curated by Mirko Zardini con/with Giovanna Borasi; allestimento/exhibition design Paolo Lanzi (Studio Baciocchi e Associati); sponsorizzata da/sponsored by Fondazione Pitti Immagine Discovery, Editrice Abitare Segesta, Golden Lady Group, Ordine degli Architetti di Como, Provincia di Siracusa, Barum, Kalatambiente, Plastic 50, Siciliclina.

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