



## Reduce/Reuse/Recycle Architecture as Resource

The German contribution to the 13th International Architecture Exhibition in Venice propagates a pragmatic and affirmative attitude toward dealing with existing buildings. The intention of 'Reduce / Reuse / Recycle – Architecture as Resource' is to portray the great value that the existing built fabric represents as the basis for shaping our future. Large-scale processes of shrinkage and repositioning must be controlled and the great unloved mass of buildings from the postwar era is waiting for revitalization. In a shrinking society in which there is an excess of the extant, the architectural profession must accept a new role: that of the developer of the existing.

The energies and potentials stored in the built fabric – including those that are substantive, aesthetic, cultural, social, and historical – must undergo reassessment. A successful model to use could be the environmental movement's successful reevaluation of garbage as a valuable raw material, which was accomplished using the internationally winning slogan of the 3 Rs: Reduce / Reuse / Recycle.

These three concepts constitute the 'waste hierarchy.' Accordingly, the slightest intervention in each case is the best. The reduction of waste – its prevention – has top priority, followed by the most direct reutilization possible – and the third priority is material transformation through recycling. The exhibition transfers this 'avoidance and minimization logic' onto our dealings with existing buildings and examines whether it enables a new value system to emerge: the less an existing condition is changed – and thus the less energy is employed – the more effective the process would be.

For the exhibition, the General Commissioner of the German contribution, Muck Petzet, has selected sixteen projects that are distinguished by an affirmative approach to everyday situations and simultaneously exemplify eleven different conversion strategies. These conversion strategies follow the logic of waste hierarchy from the smallest intervention up to material transformation: from a change in perception to classic strategies like renovation or addition to redesign and material recycling. The catalogue edited by Muck Petzet and Florian Heilmeyer expands the portrayal of these strategies with further examples, places them in an international context, and also devotes itself to the underdeveloped 'language of conversion.'

The exhibition itself is intended to embody the message of the 3 Rs in its congruence of form and substance: The pavilion is adapted with minimal means: The main entrance remains closed. The exhibition begins outside and continues in the pavilion, which is entered through a side entrance. The architecturally staged dominance of portico and central hall is suspended in favor of free movement – without obstructing the existing building with exhibition architecture. The architecture, its location, and its materiality openly become carriers of the exhibition's content: papered directly onto the walls, Erica Overmeer's large-format photographs offer views of the displayed projects and their surroundings at nearly full scale. The documentary, unbiased view of the photographer, which even shows interest in seemingly unimportant aspects, carries the main theme of the exhibition within itself – engagement with the existing.

Muck Petzet  
Commissioner  
German Contribution  
13th International  
Architecture Exhibition  
La Biennale di Venezia

Project Management /  
Communications  
sally below cultural affairs  
Schlesische Strasse 29–30  
10997 Berlin  
+49 30 69 53 70 80  
biennale2012@sbca.de

[reduce-reuse-recycle.de](http://reduce-reuse-recycle.de)



The exhibition design by Konstantin Grcic is also borne of committed restraint and deep consideration of the existing condition: In the way he positions the views shown by the photographs, a course is staged that works with the opportunities presented by the existing architecture. The images are wallpapered over the stone baseboards and occupy the 'common ground' of the natural stone floor, as if one could enter them. The eye-catching lettering designed by Thomas Mayfried and Swantje Grundler is physically united with the existing architecture: it is painted or wallpapered onto the surfaces. The potential of the spaces are put on full display – and at the same time, an unsentimental approach and references to everyday Venetian life dim any potential over glorification of the Nazi art temple to its sensuously tangible qualities.

To accomplish this, an important role is played by the 'occupation' of the space by an element literally borrowed from the Venetian streetscape: gangways used at times of severe flooding cross the rooms at different heights and serve as display carrier, seating elements, or simply as walkways and viewing platforms. Even the typeface and the system of symbols for the exhibition have – like the gangways – a strong 'everyday presence' and a powerful local reference. They are inspired by the vaporetto signage system that was developed by Giulio Cittato in the 1970s, and which has proven to be one of the few visible modernist contributions to Venice that has survived to this day.

The combination of old and new, of the existing and its continuation – developing and perpetuating – are equally present in the substance and form of the exhibition.

The German contribution is supported by the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs.



la Biennale di Venezia

13. Mostra  
Internazionale  
di Architettura

Partecipazioni nazionali



Bundesministerium  
für Verkehr, Bau  
und Stadtentwicklung