UNFOLDING PAVILION: CURATED ARCHIVES

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Casa alle Zattere,
26-31 de mayo de 2016
Venecia, Italia

How to get a place to stage an exhibition when the Venice Biennale is opening and prices are virtually unachievable? In this project, a small apartment leased by Airbnb is transformed into a gallery during the day to become at dusk a place to spend the night. Thus, not only the logic of 'sharing economy' is hacked, but it also opens new imaginaries on the possibilities of domestic space.

KEYWORDS · exhibition, temporary, hacking, Airbnb, Venice

How to organize an architecture exhibition in Venice, one of the most expensive cities in the world, during the period in which the prices of its galleries skyrocket due to high and concentrated demand, with a budget of only 2,000 euros and no institutional support?

In January 2016 we decided to present, on the occasion of the Biennale, a physical and virtual platform where to bring to the fore and discuss the growing agency in the construction of contemporary architectural discourse of a new generation of online editorial projects, which we call Curated Archives. With the term 'curated archives', we indicate constantly updated collections of digital images sharing one or more themes in common, which are usually based on social platforms such as Tumblr, Facebook or Instagram, and mostly curated pro bono by individuals or small groups of self-proclaimed editors.

With the theme already in mind, the main problem became the location, as we had to find an alternative and less expensive way to host an exhibition than to rent a gallery. It is for this reason that we turned to Airbnb in search of domestic spaces that could be temporarily converted in exhibition venues.

Proyecto / *Project*
Unfolding Pavilion – Curated Archives
Curadores / *Curators*
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Producción / *Production*
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Fotografías / *Photographer*
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Investigación / *Research*
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Ferrando, Graham McKay, Annamaria Ciabatta

LEYENDA / *LEGEND*:

1. Michael Abrahamson *Fuck Yeah Brutalism*
2. Fala Atelier
3. Mariabruna Fabrizi + Fosco Lucarelli *Socks*
4. Fabio Alessandro Fusco *FAF*
5. Luca Galorafo *The Imagelist*
6. Andrew Kovacs *Archive of Affinities*
7. Daniel Tudor Munteanu et al. *OfHouses*, (Antoine Predock Architect PC, Bogdan & Van Broeck CI-AA, Claesson Kiovisto Rune, Davide Tommaso Ferrando, Fala Atelier, Fosbury Architecture, Interval Projects, Andreas Lechner, BartLootsma & Gernot Baumann, Matheson Whiteley & Giles Reid, Graham McKay, Willie Miller, Monadnock, Office of Adrian Phiffer, OKOLO, Weltgebraus, Weyell Berner Architekten)
8. Beniamino Servino *beniamino.servino*
9. Matthew Sullivan *AQQ Index*
10. Davide Trabucco *Confórmi*
11. Cristian Valenzuela Pinto *Deseopolis*
12. Volumetrica
13. Shinichi Waki *Wakiiii*
14. Charles Young *Paperholm*

.... Corte / *Cut*
——— Pliegue convexo / *Convex fold*
.... Pliegue cóncavo / *Concave fold*
▬▬▬ Pegue aquí / *Glue here*
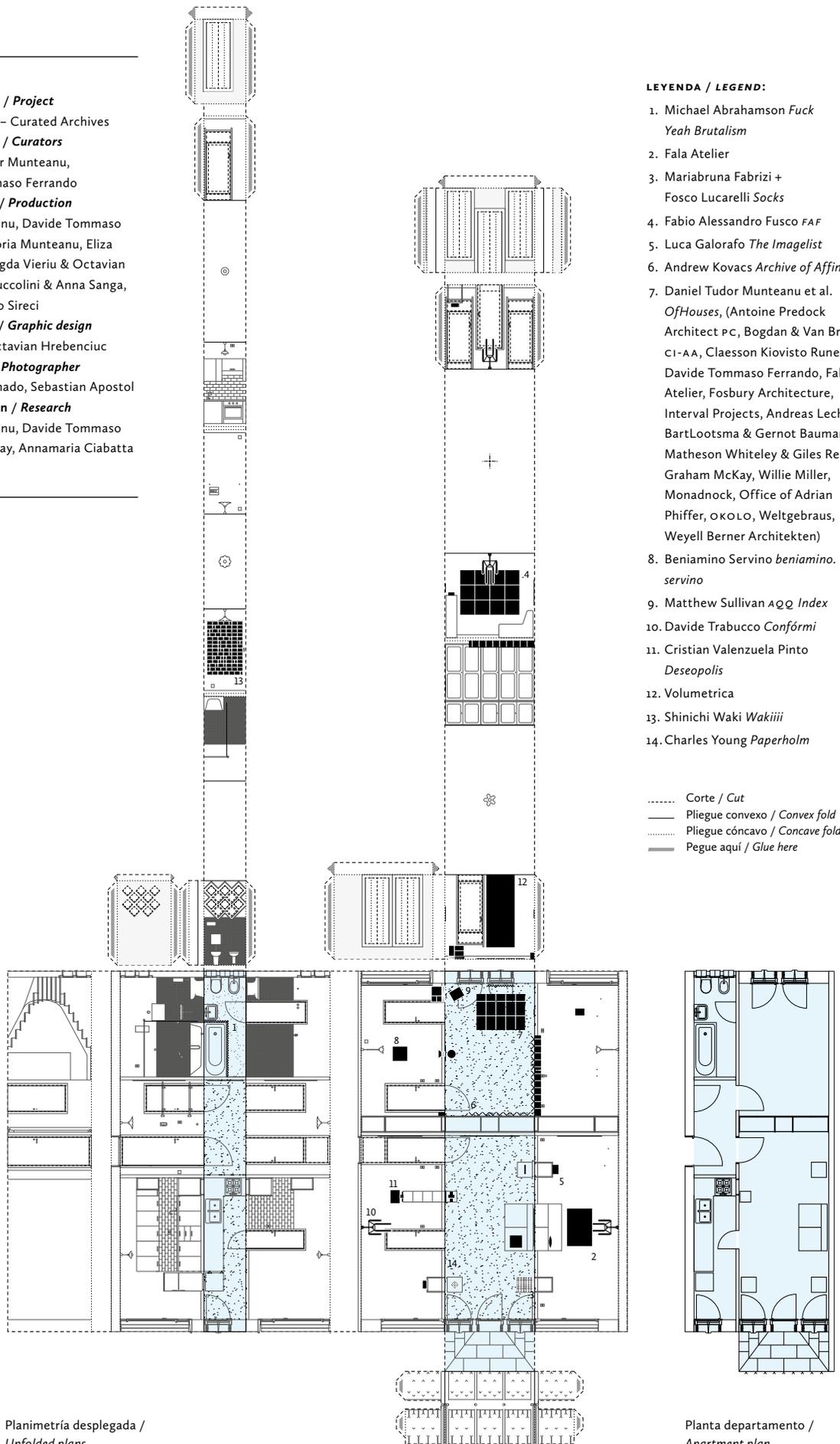
Planimetría desplegada /
Unfolded plans
E. / *S.* 1 : 200

Planta departamento /
Apartment plan
E. / *S.* 1 : 200

FIG 1 Vista de la Casa alle Zattere desde el *vaporetto* / *View of the Casa alle Zattere from the vaporetto.* © Ana Amado

FIG 2 Sala de estar del departamento de la Casa alle Zattere / *View of the living room of the apartment at the Casa alle Zattere.* © Davide Tommaso Ferrando
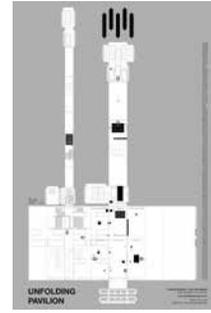

FIG 3 Afiche del espacio de exhibición / *Unfolded drawing of the exhibition space. Concepto de / Concept by* Daniel Tudor Munteanu. Dibujo de / *Drawing by* Volumetrica (Magda Vieriu, Octavian Hrebenciuc)
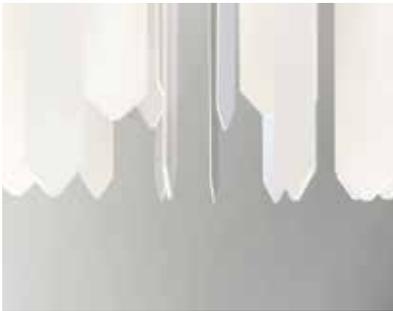

FIG 4 Davide Trabucco (*Confórmi*), Versus. © Andrea Avezzù

FIG 5 Michael Abrahamson (*Fuck Yeah Brutalism*), FYB Housewares ver. 2.1 (*Bilderatlas*). © Andrea Avezzù

FIG 6 Andrew Kovacs (*Archive of Affinities*), Making Architecture from Architecture. © Andrea Avezzù

FIG 7 Luca Galofaro, *Frammenti di un Atlante dell'Immaginazione* (Fragmentos de un Atlas de la Imaginación / *Fragments of an Atlas of Imagination*). © Andrea Avezzù

After some research, we found out that a small and cheap flat was available in the Casa alle Zattere (FIG. 1): a 1950s apartment building on the Giudecca Canal, designed by the Milanese architect Ignazio Gardella. Although this private condominium is very well known among Italian architects, few (if any) have ever had the chance to visit the building from the inside. To open it up to the public for the first time, and to make it a fundamental part of the exhibition, immediately became the core of our project.

Once the location was secured, we thoroughly documented the Casa alle Zattere, in order to create its first public comprehensive bibliography. We then visited the hosting space (FIG. 2), carefully surveying and redrawing it (FIG. 3). Finally, we sent all the collected material to the invited contributors – architects that are actively and successfully working on 'curated archives' – asking them to illustrate the core concepts of their editorial projects by means of a site-specific object/installation, capable of reacting to both the Casa alle Zattere and the little apartment that was going to be occupied by the Unfolding Pavilion.

The call resulted in a collection of very diverse objects: from a forex chandelier (FIG. 4), to a plastic bath curtain (FIG. 5), from a set of twenty pamphlets (FIG. 6) to two collages printed

FIG 8 Montando la exhibición por primera vez / *Mounting up the exhibition for the first time.* © Davide Tommaso Ferrando

FIG 9 Cocina transformada en bodega / *The kitchen transformed in warehouse.* © Davide Tommaso Ferrando

FIG 10 Vista de la habitación principal (antigua sala de estar) / *View of the main room (former living room).* De izquierda a derecha / *From left to right*: Cristian Valenzuela Pinto (Deseopolis), Memory Retention Devices; Davide Trabucco (Confórmi), Versus; Fabio Alessandro Fusco (faf), Analogous Venice; Mariabruna Fabrizi and Fosco Lucarelli (SOCKS), SOCKS: A Portable Musem; Volumetrica, Pillow; Fala Atelier, Giulio's Airbnb Apartment. © Andrea Avezzù

on plexiglass sheets (FIG. 7). Our intention was to force the authors, who are used to working with digital images, to prove their skills outside of their comfort zone. In the meantime, we built up the Unfolding Pavilion website, which now works as the permanent archive of the exhibition.

One week before the opening of the Biennale, we drove to Venice in order to verify the capacity of the apartment to be converted in a proper exhibition space (FIG. 8). We knew this was going to be the most delicate part of the process, as we had to confront ourselves with unorthodox problems that had to be resolved in unorthodox ways.

First of all, we had to hide the existing (hideous!) furniture, so we stashed most of it inside of the kitchen (FIG. 9), which remained closed and inaccessible to the public during the whole exhibition period (although we maintained enough space for us to cook meals and make coffee). What couldn't be removed was arranged in the living room and covered with cuts of white textile, providing a neutral support for the exhibited works (FIG. 10).

A second problem was that, if we wanted to stay within the 2,000 euros budget, we couldn't afford accommodation, so we needed to find a way to sleep inside of the pavilion as well. As a solution, we vertically stored the existing mattresses inside of the bedroom's wardrobe (FIG. 11), took them out every evening after closing time and placed them among the works, therefore temporarily converting the Unfolding Pavilion in a hybrid of exhibition & domestic space (FIG. 12).

A third issue was providing ourselves with some ad-hoc lights for the illumination of the works, as the existing lamps were inadequate for the task. By assembling in an unconventional way different pieces of hardware from IKEA and Le Roy Merlin, we managed to produce an original set of orientable lights that were cheaper than the cheapest of the similar options available in both stores (FIG. 13).

FIG 11 Colchones en el clóset del dormitorio / *The mattresses in the bedroom wardrobe.* © Davide Tommaso Ferrando

FIG 12 Dormitorio de noche, con un colchón en el piso, entre los trabajos exhibidos / *The bedroom at night, with a mattress on the ground, among the exhibited works.* © Davide Tommaso Ferrando

FIG 13 Vista del dormitorio / *View of the bedroom.* Adelante / *Front*: Daniel Tudor Munteanu (OfHouses), Face of the House. Atrás / *Back*: Volumetrica, Curtain © Ana Amado

The fourth and last challenge was that right after building up the exhibition, we had to dismount it and bring the apartment back to its original state, as a German couple had already booked it on Airbnb for the days preceding the *vernissage*. We also needed a safe place where to store all the works, as we had no time to remove them from the apartment. Once more, we recurred to the wardrobe of the sleeping room, stacking the whole Unfolding Pavilion inside of it (FIG.14) and bringing the key away with us during the following days. In the morning of May 26th we returned to the Casa alle Zattere, unlocked the wardrobe, hid the furniture, mounted everything up again and let the exhibition begin.

Quite interestingly, once it was officially opened, the Unfolding Pavilion started to 'behave' in a way that we didn't expect, as its domestic environment conditioned the public into being 'guests' more than 'visitors'. They didn't just pass by: they stopped, smoked on the balcony, enjoyed our bathroom, drank a coffee on the couch, read our original 1958 copy of Casabella with the first publication of the Casa... They took their shoes off, sat on the floor and socialized, sometimes until late night. They did, because they found an informal and relaxed place where to do what architects really want to do when they attend the Biennale: meet each other (FIG.15).

While working on it, we realized that the Unfolding Pavilion is first of all a project about 'hacking'. We hacked the traditional system in which exhibitions are designed, organized and communicated. We hacked Facebook and Skype into our office, as we are based in different countries and never met in person before Venice. We hacked Airbnb into making a private house temporarily public. We hacked an apartment into a exhibition space and a kitchen into a warehouse. We hacked the experience of a pavilion into the experience of a home (FIG.16). We hacked IKEA and Le Roy Merlin (take that, Jaque!). And by doing all this, we showed that today the possibility to curate an exhibition is just one step away, if one

FIG 14 Material completo de Unfolding Pavilion almacenado al interior del guardarropa del dormitorio /
The whole Unfolding Pavilion stacked inside of the bedroom's wardrobe
© Davide Tommaso Ferrando

FIG 15 Encuentros casuales y debates informales en la habitación principal /
Casual encounters and informal debates in the main room
© Davide Tommaso Ferrando

FIG 16 Cena de la noche final en la habitación principal del pabellón /
Last night dining in the main room of the pavilion
© Davide Tommaso Ferrando

has the capacity to expand his/her imaginary to the point that established practices disappear, leaving space to alternative ways of disposing of reality. **ARQ**

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Diploma in Architecture, Politecnico di Torino, 2005. Master in Advanced Architectural Design, Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Madrid, 2012. Ph.D in Architecture and Building Design, Politecnico di Torino, 2012. Architecture critic, editor, curator and educator, particularly interested in the intersections between architecture, city and media. In 2016 he was co-curator of the first "Unfolding Pavilion" and scientific consultant for the "Meeting the Commons" section of the Italian Pavilion at the 15th Venice Architecture Biennale. His texts are published, among others, on *Uncube* (Berlin, 2016), *Betonart* (Istanbul, 2016), *1:100* (Buenos Aires, 2015), *Azure* (Toronto, 2015) and *World Architecture* (Beijing, 2013). Ferrando is University Assistant in the Department of Architectural Theory and History at the University of Innsbruck, and Adjunct Professor at the Politecnico di Torino.

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Architect, Master in Architecture, Technical University Iasi, 2005. Daniel is the founder and editor of the research project 'OfHouses - a collection of old forgotten houses' (www.ofhouses.com). Has exhibited at the 5th "Urbanism\Architecture Bi-city Biennale" in Shenzhen and has contributed to "OfficeUS", the u.s. Pavilion for the 14th Venice Architecture Biennale. His texts and graphic essays were published on *San Rocco* (Milan, 2014-2015), *Log* (New York, 2014), *CLOG* (New York, 2015) and *Oase* (Rotterdam, 2015). In 2015 he curated the "Aformal Academy/ Pedagogical Infrastructure" chapter for the 6th Shenzhen "Urbanism\Architecture Bi-city Biennale" and contributed to the "The State of the Art of Architecture" editorial project for the Chicago Architecture Biennale. In 2016 he was the co-curator of the first "Unfolding Pavilion" at the 15th Venice Architecture Biennale.