Venice Biennale Riavvio

The thoughtful design of small buildings has long played a vital role in the evolution of the profession of architecture and the practice of individual architects. The limited scale of pavilions, small houses, and summer cabins has allowed designers to explore the expressive potential and practical realities of materials and construction technologies in great detail. In so doing, architects have built some of their most exquisite and compelling work.

This studio will focus on the design of small buildings with a strong identity derived primarily from the materials and construction methods that are used to generate them. Studio members will be asked to explore the spatial order, component forms and assembly details that characterize basic materials and systems. The program will be limited to a careful selection of archetypal spaces, permitting a focus on the expressive potential of the materials themselves.

The vehicle for this study will be the replacement of aging national pavilions at Biennale exhibition grounds in Venice, Italy. Over the years, leading architects such as Carlo Scarpa, Alvar Aalto, and Sverre Fehn have designed buildings in the gardens. Most of them are now in poor condition and need replacement. The intention is that the unique building cultures of the host nations be reflected in the new works. Pavilions require a simple set of evocative spaces that will inspire exhibit design at international festivals of art and architecture in alternate years.

The term will begin with a series of design projects exploring, one by one, universal materials: timber, steel, concrete and glass. Students will be asked to select a host country for the final projects; one that has a strong, regional design tradition invested in material. The sites will be drawn from eight positions on the east side of the Rio dei Gardini that collectively form linked public spaces along the edge of the canal. Adjacent works by classmates will establish the physical context as the projects evolve.

Advanced standing in the building technology course sequence will be a benefit in pursuing this project. Expectations of the studio include:

- Detailed case studies of materials and construction systems.
- Completion of numerous design cycles using appropriate media.
- Testing of material alternatives through the development of evocative physical models at a variety of scales.
- Integration of the constructive means of the building with the culture and tradition identified for the scheme.
- Thoughtful and patient exploration of the building structure, enclosure and interior fittings to the level of explicit details.

Useful links:
archdaily.com/784536/ad-classics-nordic-pavilion-in-venice-sverre-fehn
mimoa.eu/projects/Italy/Venice/Australian Pavilion for the Venice Biennale
veneziadavivere.com/en/itineraries/discovering-secret-venice-carlo-scarpa
Site Coordinates for Google Earth search:  45°25'44.16"N     12°21'34.61"E

Peter Zumthor, Swiss Pavilion, Expo 2000
Shigeru Ban, Paper Palace Pavilion, Hanover
Mies Van Der Rohe , Barcelona 1929
Sverre Fehn, Nordic Pavilion, Venice, 1962