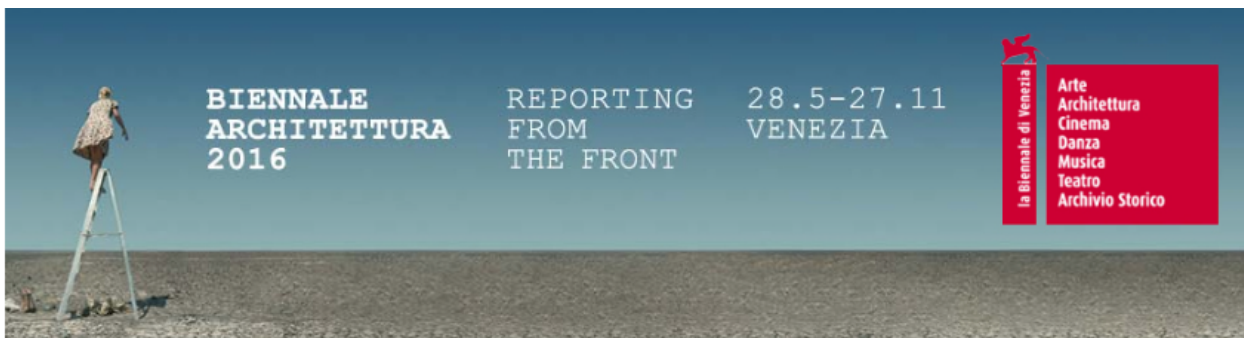


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15th Venice Biennale for Architecture 2016

Reporting From the Front

Alejandro Aravena | Director of the 15th Intl. Architecture Exhibition 2016

" The Civil Society

We would also like to present cases where organized communities and empowered citizens, sometimes without any formal training in design, have been able to improve their own built environment."

R E F A V E L A

structures of spontaneous architecture in the favelas of rio de janeiro |
brazil

a photo documentary by patricia parinejad

COMMUNITIES:

Babil nia - Cantagalo - Ch cara do C o - Cidade de Deus - Complexo do Alem o -
Perreira da Silva - Pav o-Pav ozinho - Rocinha - Santa Marta - Vidigal

FAVELAS, named after the Brazilian creeping plant 'favela' have existed in Brazil since the late 19th century. Wretched areas of closely packed dwellings were planted in the cities, on the outskirts of the cities, and continued to spread rampantly, growing out of all control. The problem became worse around 1950 when the industrialization of Brazil led to mass migration from rural areas to the big cities. At first the municipal administration tried to resolve this problem by building social housing. Some of the favelas were bulldozed and their inhabitants were forced to resettle elsewhere. But areas of informal settlements have continued to grow.

According to the *Secretaria Municipal de Habitação* the slum's residents are already 22% of the population in Rio.

Today, a billion people across the world live in slums. There were 40 million more slum dwellers worldwide in 2012 than there were in 2010, according to the UN.

By 2030 this number will have doubled.

My project explores the remarkable reality of these informal settlements and the interlacing structures of the spontaneous architecture of Rio de Janeiro's favelas. The tapestry of buildings in such unexpected patterns and the creative energy exuding from the wildly interwoven structures is fascinating. Reminiscent of a honeycomb or a natural organism, similar to the aforementioned namesake they seem to crawl up the hills and etch their way into the surrounding jungle. An undulating and constantly growing labyrinth inexorably overflowing into the wilderness and into the *Mata Atlântica*; an intricate maze built from trash and waste, anything available – the living environment for hundreds of thousands of people in search for a decent living space in which chaos and order seem to coexist.

Due to events such as the World Cup and the Olympics in 2016 new spaces were needed, and some favelas are being cleared as part of an urban clean-up campaign. And thus part of the country's valuable architectural history is being destroyed.

I spent months documenting countless houses, building structures and different surfaces, the materials that had been used and the items/components and elements fabricated from these materials such as scaffoldings, walls, doors, windows, stairs, roofs. The result is a massive compendium that is at least as unusual and surprising as the structures I photographed. In comparison to planned architecture dynamics of informal slum communities and informal-settlement shows that not only intelligence and intuition but also creativity is among the key elements in order to create a decent living environment.

The connection and bridge between society and architecture was created through a mutual collaboration. Looking at slum architecture as a creative input could offer solutions and it could become a role models for urban developments, specially with the backdrop of the actual refugee crisis where more and more dwellings are needed.

It is striking how much this architecture is a reflection of Latin America, Brazil itself, and particularly so of Rio, a city full of surprising discoveries and delights. Compared with conventional images of parts of buildings or housing, I found an abundance of unique solutions, shimmering colours, diverse shapes and unusual ways using materials. This spontaneously created architecture has a thousand different faces. It always reveals something new, and this inventiveness is typical of a city's dynamic identity. Every door is different from the next, and no two adjacent windows are ever the same. Each dwelling has its own unmistakable look and unique singularity.

Portraits of individual residents emphasize the human aspect of this entirely distinct way of living. The black and white photographs show sensitive and passionate human beings full of character who grew up in these rough but vibrant living conditions.

The documentary is also interesting in the context of modern post-1920'ies architectural history. Ever since the Bauhaus era and the industrial production of modular architectural elements, housing construction has become generic across the world and no longer reflects cultural differences. Settlements in Tokyo barely look any different from those in Berlin, Queens, or Ordos.

A global 'copy-paste' of architectural elements.

In massive housing estates, the way of expressing any individuality is by the name on the doorbell at most.

Beauty is often where it is least expected.

In this documentary I have tried to recover and preserve the poetic identity of this appealing but unheeded architecture and return some dignity to a flayed reality.

The present informal architectural catalogue is also a tribute to the variance of craftsmanship, artistic vivacity and architectural potency. At the same time an homage to the countless and nameless gifted builders of the neglected and, to some extent, despised favela architecture.

And perhaps one day we will realize that the feared slums throughout the world do in fact contain the urban DNA of the future. ‹

All photographs are printed on recycled, non-bleached and chlorine-free cardboard.

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The exhibition at the Venice Biennale is generously supported by the German Savings Banks Association (DSGV).

<http://www.dsgv.de>

Exhibitions:

- *Favela Cantagalo – Gilda no Cantagalo, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*

- *Residence of the German Consul, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*

- ***Venice Biennale for Architecture 2016, Venice, Italy***

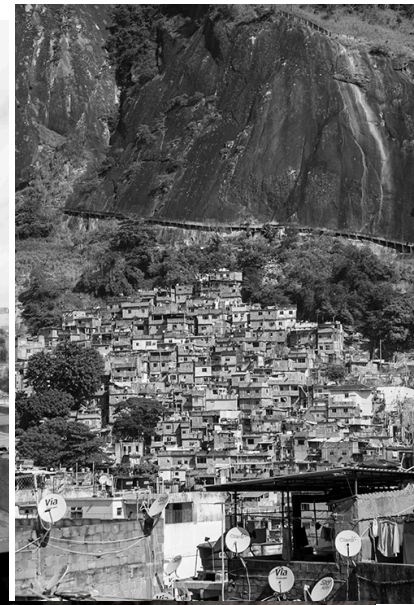
Opening night - VIP Preview

Palazzo Mora | Venice | May 26th and 27th 2016 | 6.00 pm

Exhibition: May 28th - November 27th 2016

Art Space DSGV Berlin, Germany

with the support of Oscar Ferreira Fontes - Architect and Assessor at the Secretary of State of Development, Energy, Industry and Services, Rio de Janeiro Economic.



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