

# A10



#42

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## Start

- Ski park, Bålsta
- Observation tower, Peize
- Heritage centre, Stirling
- Cultural and recreational complex, Sarajevo

## Ready

- School, Aubervilliers
- Cultural centre, Coimbra
- Day care centre, Espoo
- Office renovation, Edinburgh
- Art gallery, Opole
- Villa, Cabrera de Mar
- Research institute, Wageningen
- Town hall, Las Torres de Cotillas
- Control centre, Venice

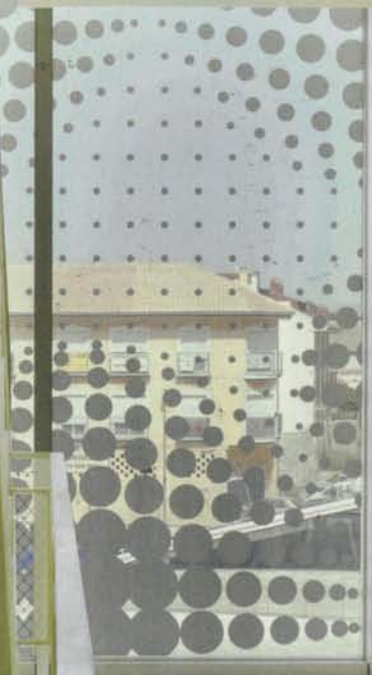
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- Interview: Teresa Novais and Jorge Carvalho of aNC
- Absolutely romantic – a new generation of Italian architects
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**Editor-in-chief:** Hans Ibelings  
**Art direction & design:** Florian Mewes  
**Editors:** Kirsten Hannema,  
Dutton R. Hauhart, Kim Hoefnagels,  
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**Cover photo:** David Frutos

**Correspondents:**  
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## Centre and periphery

HANS IBELINGS

One of the underlying assumptions of A10 as a pan-European magazine is that in this era of globalization, architecture worthy of attention is being built in all corners of the European continent. Nowadays the cultural centres – in particular the West European capitals – are no longer the only reference points; in many instances the significance and impact of an interesting building in a place which, until recently, would have been regarded as culturally peripheral, is greater than that of the umpteenth interesting building in a hub of cultural developments. That may appear obvious, but the full consequences often go unnoticed. For as a result of this new reality, the hierarchical relationship between centre and periphery has altered and partially disappeared. The balance has undeniably shifted from the centre to the periphery. The fact that suburbia usually wins out politically and economically over the city is one such phenomenon. That on the Internet, numerous forms of knowledge recycling are more lucrative and successful than the production of knowledge, is a second example. That more money can be made with money than with any service or product, is a third.

But there is no future in information recycling on the

Internet if nobody is interested in producing new knowledge and, similarly, you can only keep on earning money with money as long as someone else out there is prepared to work for his or her money. And so also, suburbia exists by the grace of the city that suburbanites have turned their backs on and which they only use consumptively in the form of shopping, eating out and the occasional visit to a museum or theatre.

During a trip across the Sahara in the 1950s, the Dutch architect Aldo van Eyck was troubled by the feeling that in the emptiness of the desert he always appeared to be in the middle. As long as he was in the desert, he was unable to escape from that sensation. It is a feeling that can also occur in today's world, where everything can seem to be the centre in an environment that has a lot in common with the emptiness of the Sahara.

All this is perhaps no more than a half-thought, but it is nevertheless possible to draw a conclusion from it, namely that if everything appears to have become the same and equal, we must search for new ways of separating major issues from minor ones. And, restricting that to architecture, ask what really matters at the moment; what is the essence of current architecture? Especially in these times of uncertainty and crisis (which is certainly an accurate description of the present European condition), it is necessary to formulate a new centre of architectural culture, to rediscover the essence of the discipline. ←

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Teresa Novais and Jorge Carvalho of aNC talk about Pritzker prize winners, Portugal and the economic crisis: 'It is a very pessimistic time, so that's why we must be more optimistic. For us the economic crisis makes it very difficult, but in spite of that we have to be more lucid, vigilant, don't you think?'



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### 62 Out of obscurity

Just about everything of Gottfried Böhm's exceptional Pilgrimage church in Neviges has been kept in its original state, down to the single glazing in the annex windows. This emphasizes its unique character as an index fossil of the modernization that the Second Vatican Council promised to deliver.



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# Control centre, Venice

*C+S converted a nineteenth-century shed into a technological nerve centre from which to manage traffic in the Venetian Lagoon.*

ITALY — TEXT: LUIGI PRESTINENZA, PHOTOGRAPHY: PIETRO SAVORELLI

The latest project by C+S – Carlo Cappai and Alessandra Segantini – involves the renovation and conversion of a *teza* inside the Arsenal in Venice. A *teza* is a simple shed building with a masonry structure (in some cases – though not here – with terracotta columns) and a truss roof, more often than not in wood. This abandoned nineteenth-century structure has been turned into a new space to host the electronic equipment that will manage port traffic following the completion of the MOSE project.

MOSE (an acronym for *Modulo Sperimentale Elettromeccanico*, in English, Experimental Electromechanical Module, as well as an allusion to the name of the prophet Moses and the miracle of the parting of the waters during the Flight from Egypt) is a system of underwater mobile gates in the Venetian Lagoon designed to control tidal waters. Once the project becomes operational (the forecast date is 2014, though forecasts in Italy are not always to be relied on) it will keep the waters of the Lagoon from rising above 110 centimetres, a level that causes problems for residents and tourists alike, as well as flooding the ground floors of the city's buildings.

In line with their architectural research, which focuses on a refined and sensual approach, though pared down almost to the point of minimalism, Cappai and Segantini proposed an historically exemplary renovation and, at the same time, the insertion of a non-aggressive though non-mimetic element with a modern form.

The objective was to propose a minimally invasive technology, a contemporary layer that is discreetly added to the sedimentations typical of the building's history. 'We played,' Segantini tells us, 'with the memory of the space. An empty space, originally occupied temporarily by ships under construction or being refurbished.'

This was achieved by carving out a basement level to contain the most cumbersome equipment, demolishing an infelicitous later addition and substituting it with a veranda lit from above, and, finally, by inserting a Cor-Ten steel service box inside the shed. This volume, which functions as an umbilical cord between the lower level and the roof, contains all of the piping and other technical elements best hidden from view. To avoid it looking like a banal service shaft, it was transformed into a sculptural and highly plastic object, reminiscent of the works of Donald Judd or Richard Serra.

Lightweight wood and glass walls subdivide the space containing the offices and meeting rooms, maintaining the unified perception of the original shed. The parquet flooring was raised to accommodate cabling and ensure the flexibility of the workstation outlets. Thanks to the continuous wood flooring, the end result is very different from the fragmentary appearance typical of raised access flooring systems composed of prefabricated square tiles. →



↑ By keeping the interventions to a minimum, the building retains its original quality. ↓ Cor-Ten steel box containing all services





↑ Veranda

(Control centre, Venice)

The restoration of the *teza* also revealed the quality of the structure of its materials: in particular, the bricks highlighted by a thin layer of plaster that vibrates under the light. The roof was disassembled and restored, maintaining the original materials where possible. However, the most successful part of the project is without a doubt the new roof of the veranda that, as mentioned, replaced a previous addition. Photovoltaic cells set into the glass roof structure produce energy and shade the office spaces, producing a highly contemporary pattern of light and shadow.



↑ Office space

The project also includes other energy-saving measures, including a geothermal system that draws heat from the ground. While in Italy these technologies are now widespread in new constructions, they remain very rare in restorations and projects involving listed buildings. Segantini: 'This project at the Arsenal was one of the first renovation projects to systematically apply the principles of sustainability'.

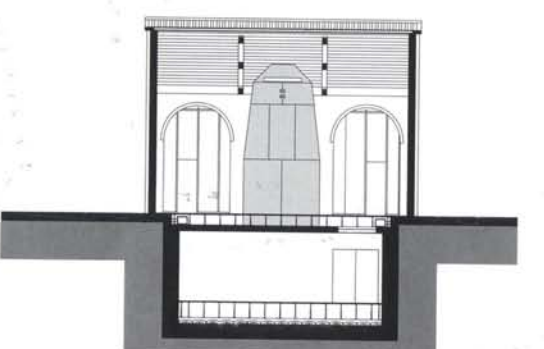
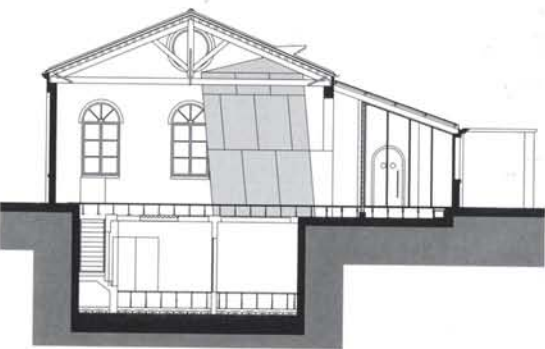
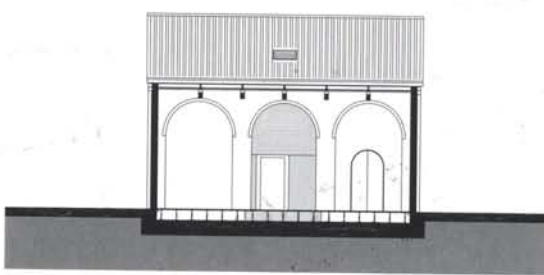
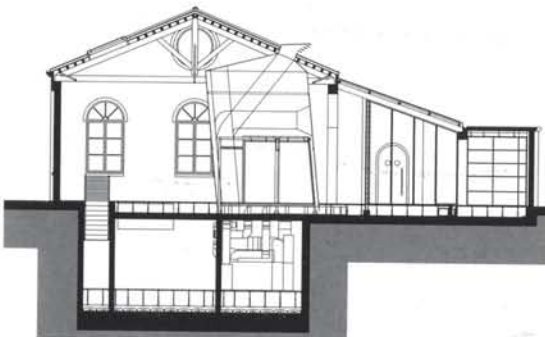
Beyond its technological merits, the building represents an optimum example of the possibilities offered by interventions even in such a delicate location as the city of Venice: rehabilitating the material qualities while simultaneously enriching

them by applying seductive and non-aggressive technologies, an approach that is not so much high-tech as soft-tech, or even high-touch. The new is superimposed on and integrated with the existing, but does not take its place: it is a poetic that privileges the and/and instead of the or/or. 'It is a new layer,' Segantini concludes, perhaps with a hint of rhetoric, 'that seeks to confront the chiaroscuro nature of Venetian memory.' ←

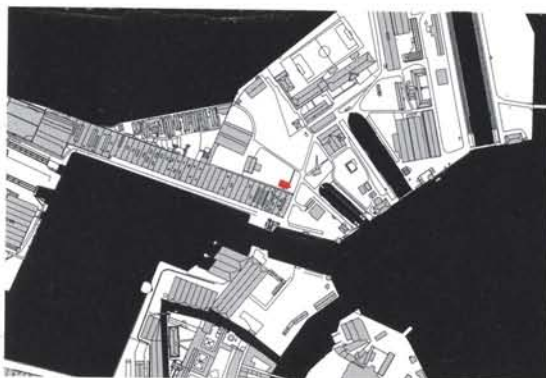
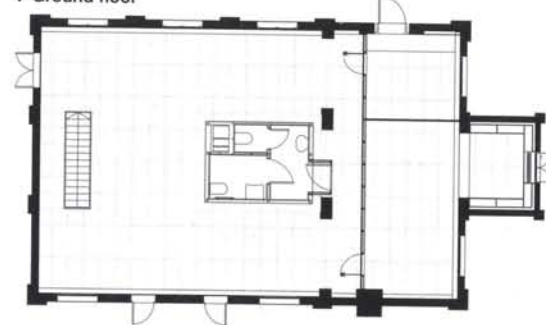
**HARBOUR BRAIN BUILDING, 2009–2011**

Architect: C+S Associati  
 Client: Magistrato alle Acque di Venezia (through its agent, Consorzio Venezia)  
 Address: Arsenale, Venice  
 Info: web.cipiuesse.it

↓ Sections



↓ Ground floor



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