



On View | A Satellite Show at the Venice Architecture Biennale, Hosted Through (and Inspired by) Airbnb

CULTURE, DESIGN By KEVIN MCGARRY

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Much of this year's Rem Koolhaas-curated Architecture Biennale in Venice, which opens this weekend, explores the 20th century. But the Airbnb Pavilion, a satellite three-day pop-up exhibition opening tonight and organized by Fabrizio Ballabio, Alessandro Bava, Luis Ortega Goveia and Octave Perrault, a group of students and recent graduates of the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London, investigates a distinctly 21st-century phenomenon: the way people loan out their apartments in the newfangled "sharing economy."

Most unofficial pavilions at the Biennale are housed in palazzos or other grand structures around Venice, but the Airbnb Pavilion occupies a modest vacation rental, which will double as Biennale housing for its organizers. "We saw the space for the first time yesterday when we arrived in Venice, carrying all of the works in our hand luggage," Bava explained by email. "I'm actually writing from the Jacuzzi." While a host of architects, including Florian Beigel, Raphael Zuber and Pascal Flammer, have supplied renderings of proposed interventions into the space, in the end the organizers chose to leave the rental untouched. Instead, these plans are on display alongside works by more than a dozen artists, including Stewart Uoo, whose video, "Confessions," loops on a laptop left on the bed; Charles Broskoski, who has replaced framed photos with images of CGI orchids; and Jon Rafman, whose animation of a house infinitely wallpapered by a Juan Gris painting echoes the playful collision of art, design and architecture taking place throughout the apartment.

"This started as a pragmatic thing," Bava noted. "We realized we could rent an apartment in Venice using Airbnb to do an exhibition during the Biennale, and that Airbnb was actually the most interesting thing for us to explore. Architects are always talking about the Internet in abstract ways; Airbnb is an amazing paradigm that bridges real spaces and online spaces and shows that architecture is not dead." The location of the apartment has been kept semisecret because it's a private residence, but canal-side (and virtual) chatter have made the once under-the-radar project the talk of the town.