

ARCHITECTURE **Australian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale**

Since 1895, the Giardini has been the main venue for the Venice Biennale. On its grounds sit a collection of architectural gems representing 29 countries. Designed by celebrated architects like Gerrit Rietveld, Sverre Fehn, and Alvar Aalto, these pavilions range from neoclassical to modern, turning the Giardini into a sort of timeline of architectural styles. Just in time for the opening of this year's Art Biennale, Australia inaugurates its new pavilion—the first one built at the Giardini in this century. Designed by Melbourne-based architects Denton Corker Marshall, the enigmatic black box hovers over the canal, replacing a temporary pavilion built in 1988. "We embraced the responsibility of designing a new structure in such a distinct setting and proposed something different and special, to make the Australian Pavilion a 'must-see' for visitors to the Biennale," says one of the firm's directors, John Denton. The black box is composed of panels that can be opened according to the requirements of each exhibit, adding a dynamic and sculptural accent to its stealthy look. Says Denton: "We saw the 'black box' a little like the black object in Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, just landing in the Giardini from the antipodes." In the interior, this bold image subtly shifts. A white box inside provides neutral space that can be modified to fit a variety of exhibition types. On May 6, the pavilion will be inaugurated for this year's Biennale (through Nov. 22).
—David Basulto, founder and editor-in-chief of the website ArchDaily

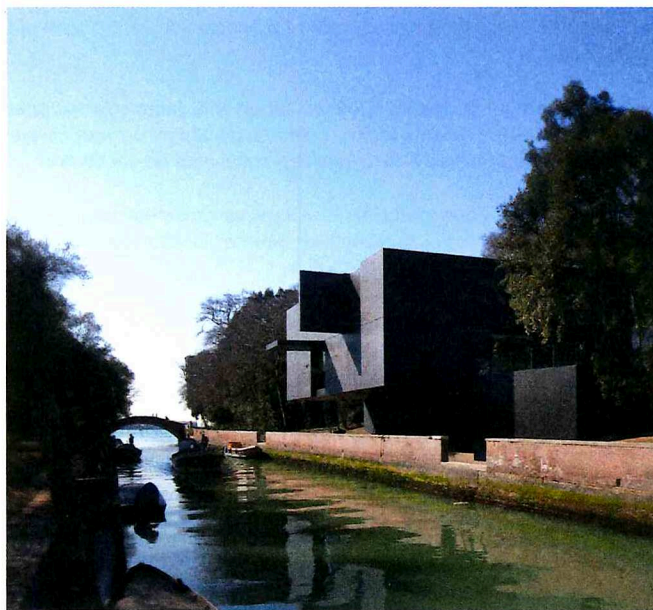


EXHIBIT **"Collective Focus: Italy"**

New Yorkers like to carp—mostly about New York, a place that's been slowly mulcted of its character over the past few decades. Still, its denizens try to make the best of it. One way of doing that is by looking to those few countries that have managed to preserve their cultural heritage, and Italy immediately comes to mind. "Italy has always been one of the great centers of innovation," says Steven Learner, founder of Collective Design, an annual design fair in New York, returning for its third edition this month (May 13–17) at Skylight Clarkson Sq. Each year, Collective Design's Focus presentation features influential design from a particular country or region. This year the exhibition, titled "Collective Focus: Italy," encompasses the enduring impact of Italian design on artists and designers from across the globe. It's being curated by the editor-in-chief of *W* magazine, Stefano Tonchi. "He has a deep knowledge of art and design," Learner says. "He applies that educated eye with a personal sense of history and passion." Tonchi, Florentine by birth, knows all about his native country's contributions to modern design. He extols the greats like Ettore Sottsass, Nanda Vigo, Andrea Branzi, and Giò Ponti, not simply for their functional work, but for their decorative art and experimentations in other media. Furniture and lighting from the early midcentury era through to contemporary will be on display, handpicked by Tonchi from galleries showing at the fair, including Nicholas Kilner (New York) and Memphis-Post Design Gallery (Milan), among others. Tonchi explains that Italy's heritage is very important to the world of design. The country has reason to complain about its political leaders or the Eurozone's tanking currency, for example, but the Sistine Chapel will never be in danger of housing a future Duane Reade. "The memory of the past," Tonchi says, "is always present in the mind of any Italian designer." —Charles Curkin