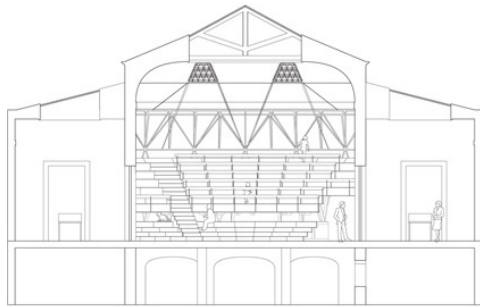


# What happened to the *Stadium of the Close Looking?*

THE RELATIVE AND COMBINED SIGNIFICANCE  
OF DETAIL AND CONTEXT IN THE AFTERLIFE.

- A SAD STORY AT LEAST FOR NOW -

# Introduction



The *Stadium of the Close Looking* was presented in Venice during the Architecture Biennale in 2010, as the centrepiece of the British Pavilion. The pavilion was re-named Villa Frankenstein, to focus on Britain's historical fascination with Venice and the obsessive documentation of the city by Victorian social critic and historian John Ruskin.

This theme highlights the significance of **context** and **detail** for determining a strategy. The story of the afterlife of the stadium now reveals where context can poison even the most virtuous strategy and too much attention to detail can obscure awareness of context to the detriment of the strategy.

# What is it?



A wooden 1:10 scale model representing a portion of the London 2012 Olympic stadium was erected in the British Pavilion curated by muf architecture/art for the XII Venice Architecture Biennale.

# Who built it?



The expertise of Spazio Legno, specialist carpenters based at the Giudecca, Bertoldini metalworkers based at the Lido and Atelier One, structural engineers from London made this installation possible.

An extraordinary example of tight collaboration and productive exchange of knowledge between local artisans and foreign innovative engineering design.

# What is it for?

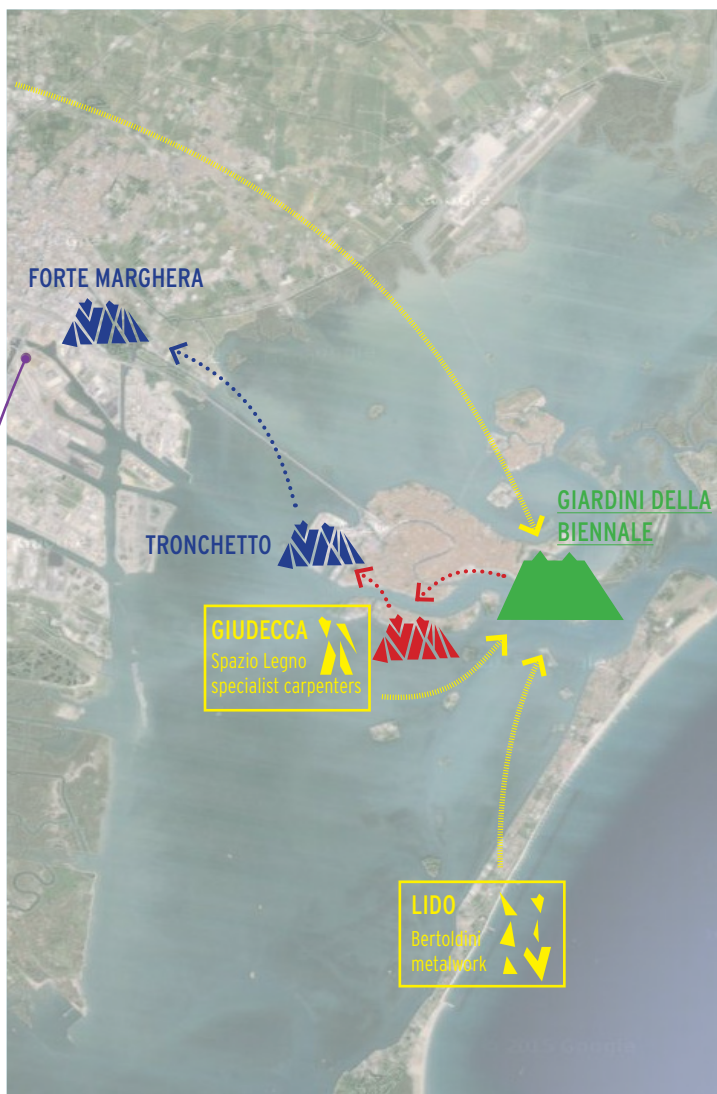


The installation showed how a model of an Olympic Stadium could be repurposed to host drawing workshops and discussions for visitors and local schools. This versatile construction was conceived with the aim to be re-used, also after the Biennale period in a new and permanent location.

It would be a gift to Venice both as a physical resource and as a conceptual contribution to policy making for the revitalisation of the city.

## LONDON

Atelier One  
structural engineer



## PADOVA

Città Invisibile  
fittings cooperative





# Chapter I.



After the Biennale, the stadium was transported to the Giudecca, to be re-built and used by the children at an elementary school. Bureaucratic obstacles resulted in a formal request to remove the stockpiled components from the school's garden in Spring 2012. After 18 months of outdoor storage, all the materials were still in very good condition.

# Chapter II.



Upon hearing about this institutional failure/opportunity, We Are Here Venice volunteered to explore alternative futures for the stadium, rather than disposal. A place at Forte Marghera was found and an agreement was reached with the local administration and the organisation responsible for managing the compendium. The prospect of contributing to the bottom-up, community led, spontaneous revitalization of this magical area and strategic resource for Venice matched the original curator's intentions perfectly. The stadium would host performances, concerts, workshops, and it would be placed next to the *Museo dell'Imbarcazione Tradizionale* ([www.facebook.com/mit.venezia/?pnref=lhc](https://www.facebook.com/mit.venezia/?pnref=lhc)) - a living museum created and run by young locals to rescue, restore and use traditional Venetian boats ([www.ilcaicio.it](http://www.ilcaicio.it)).



# Chapter III.



Forte Marghera management took responsibility for administrative procedures (approval for erecting a new structure in a public park) while wahv and muf planned the reconstruction and sought sponsorship for the afterlife. It took 12 months for the official approvals, during which time a couple of sponsorship packages had to be abandoned due to timing uncertainties.

## Chapter IV.



Meanwhile Forte Marghera management decided to evict the flourishing *Museo dell'Imbarcazione Tradizionale*, thereby removing the “context” within which the new stadium would have thrived. An alternative option inside another warehouse at Forte Marghera was arranged by a theatre group founded by one of the SpazioLegno directors. But this option fell through because of the failure by Forte Marghera to evict a bankrupt, inactive business that occupied the space!

# Chapter V.



In April 2015 [wahv](#) received a message that the stadium stockpile had been vandalised. All the valuable metal components had been stolen and the protective tarpaulin partially removed. Some of the wood had also been taken. Despite restructuring of the Forte Marghera administration and substitution of the previous management team the prospects for the compendium do not look interesting.



# A new Afterlife



Will the *Stadium of the Close Looking* ever find another life and location?  
...or will it transform into another Frankenstein creature?

Thanks to the collaboration of Città Invisibile cooperative, the remaining materials are finally being taken to safety and will be used for whatever construction opportunities come their way.

## Reflections

What didn't work about this initiative? What could we have done to overcome bureaucratic obstacles?

How could we improve the effectiveness of community led strategies?

If you have any suggestions, or if you are interested in taking part in discussions like this, please join us on 13<sup>th</sup> July at the Querini Stampalia auditorium for the *Culture Beyond Tourism* workshop!



[theatrum-mundi.org/activities/culture-beyond-tourism-public-panel/](http://theatrum-mundi.org/activities/culture-beyond-tourism-public-panel/)