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Proposal for a respectful renovation of the German Pavilion



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Links

ingenhoven architects' proposal for an open German Pavilion

At this year's Venice Biennale, four large openings in the walls of the German Pavilion have transformed the building into an open house which symbolizes Germany's openness for refugees. Two years ago, Christoph Ingenhoven came up with the idea to open the Pavilion. He made a clear statement on the ongoing debate about the German Pavilion and proposed the following:

"The German Pavilion at the Venice Biennale of Architecture in the Giardini has been the subject of heated debates and wide-ranging proposals for many years, with some going as far as suggesting its demolition.

The building stands accused of allowing itself, without putting up any resistance, to be altered by an architect who was on close terms with the National Socialists. For this crime, the pavilion should be punished with the death penalty. While the death penalty was abolished for people in Germany several decades ago, it should be carried out on this absolutely harmless exhibition building over 70 years after the crime. Interestingly, it is the victim of the crime rather than the perpetrator who is being called to account here. Forgive me, but because it is not anything to do with the Gestapo Headquarters, are we then not to retain it and make it accessible to the public? Because it is just a former unremarkable 19th century exhibition building, slightly retouched in its youth, must we tear it down?

That is absurd, therefore I suggest just letting it stay, making some slight adjustments to its present setting and performing a respectful renovation and modernisation to create a venue for interesting and stimulating events and exhibitions.

The lettering with the name Germania I would continue to let fade, as it has been doing for years. I would open the rear apsis,

add a small terrace and seating steps down to the water, thin out a few trees and thus create a clear view of the lagoon and out towards San Giorgio Maggiore, Santa Maria della Salute and San Marco.

While much has been said over many decades about the supposed non-playability of this building and its "past", what has been completely forgotten is that it has been - standing only a few metres from one of the most beautiful city panoramas in the world, but without allowing a view, indeed turned away from it and surrounded by intentionally neglected gardens - robbed of its real possibilities. The use and tranquil adaptation will civilise the building to a certain extent. What better way of masterfully dealing with this inheritance, viewed by many as problematic, than to take ownership of it through use and to live with it?"