

Russia's Milan Expo pavilion features a giant canopy wrapped in stainless steel



Photo © Alexey Naroditskiy

The Russian national pavilion at this year's World Expo in Milan is an attraction in its own right. Designed by Sergei Tchoban, lead architect and Managing Partner of the SPEECH architectural bureau, the building's most outstanding feature is the expansive floating canopy which shelters the main entrance and mirrors the hustle and bustle beneath, while at the same time supporting the roof garden above.

By Matjaž Matošec

Located on the EXPO's main street Decumano, the Russian pavilion covers an area of 3,260 m². The building virtually repeats the given plot of land with an elongated and rather narrow parallelepiped con-

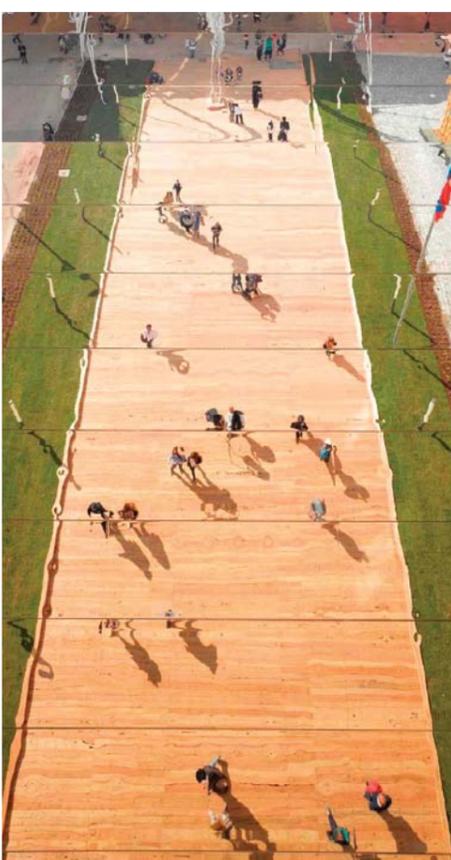
figuration, thrusting forward a dynamic canopy over the main entrance to the pavilion. The 30-meter canopy has a striking curved form, giving the structure a memorable silhouette which is clearly visible in the EXPO's panorama. From the side of the main entrance, this element is lined with polished stainless steel, thus not only protecting visitors from rain and sun, but also serving as a gigantic mirror in which people can see and photograph themselves and their surroundings. To achieve mirror-like appearance, the stainless steel of Italian provenance was polished to the highest possible level (no. 8). Given the price of this material and considering the fact that the pavilion is a temporary structure only built for the duration of the Expo (1 May–31 October 2015), the architects opted for

a sandwich design comprising an inner cladding of polymer panels measuring 3 cm in thickness and plates of stainless steel, 2 mm thick, which form the outer layer of the cantilevered canopy. This solution ensured both the desired reflective look and cost efficiency. One of the key ideas of this project was the continuity of the over 100-year architectural tradition of the Soviet Union and Russia participating in World Exhibitions. The facilities for the national pavilions were built in various styles, ranging from Constructivism of the 1920s and Art Deco of the 1930s to modernism of the post-war period. Common features can be clearly traced in their architectural appearance: Russia's pavilions have always been distinguished by a dynamic, simple and easy-to-remember

form, with mandatory emphasis on the main entrance area. This is the idea that the architects of SPEECH tried to embody in their design, using the language of contemporary architecture. Aside from stainless steel, wood was selected as the principal material, being also the most environmentally friendly and the most traditional in Russian architecture. The entire top tier of the pavilion is finished with wood panelling, while the lower tier is faced with transparent and opaque glass. The entrance area is executed out of transparent glass, making an approachable, inherently conventional boundary between the EXPO territory and the exhibition. The interiors of the pavilion area were also designed by SPEECH: the mirrored ceiling is echoed by the load-bearing columns trimmed in stainless steel, and the oval-shaped reception desk is made of wood, picking up and developing the theme of the rigid rhythm of slats on the side facades of the building.

Rivet wins award for work on Len Lye Centre

Shortly after the publication of the September issue which featured an article on the Len Lye Centre in New Zealand, the New Plymouth steel company Rivet won industry plaudits for its work on the building. The company was responsible for the fabrication of the seventeen 14-meter high shiny stainless steel panels that wrap around the building. Rivet was presented with an Excellence in Stainless Steel award, given out as part of Metals Week which is held biennially in New Zealand. Commenting on the award, Managing Director of Rivet Steve Scott said that being involved in the Len Lye project has raised the profile of the company both nationally and across the globe, which could potentially open doors for new work opportunities.



The 30-meter canopy is wrapped in polished stainless steel, reflecting the main entrance area underneath. Photo © Roland Halbe

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