

SweaterLodge to wrap Venice Biennale in orange cocoon

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Two Vancouver architects will be wrapping Venice in some Canadian warmth next fall.

SweaterLodge, a project by Bill Pechet and Stephanie Robb, has been chosen to represent Canada at the Venice Biennale of Architecture.

A national juried competition selected *SweaterLodge* as its design for the Canadian pavilion at the 2006 Biennale in Architecture, which will take place in Venice, Italy from September to November 2006.

The pavilion is an octagonal wood and steel structure with a spiralling roof that has been compared to a treehouse or a teepee.

Inside the pavilion, the ceiling and walls are draped with a giant orange fleece sweater.

"The juncture where those two come together is pretty rich and the spatial potentials we're seeing from it are quite interesting," says Robb.

The sweater is 350 square metres of a material called Polartech 200, made from recycled pop bottles. It's like being inside a soft, orange cocoon.

Inside the pavilion, films will be screened against the sweater.

In the spirit of the West Coast, the film projectors will be bicycle-powered. As visitors enter the building they come upon a row of stationary bicycles. If they get on and pedal, they see the films about Vancouver.

"Stephanie and I needed a vehicle, pardon the pun, to bring in more information," says Pechet.

The films are vignettes of Vancouver, with a mix of urban and wilderness settings. Among them will be footage taken by Pechet and Robb's colleague Heidi Nesbitt, who shot with a camcorder as she rode her bicycle around town.

"It's a typical camcorder inside my [bicycle basket] and then this waterproof lens gets affixed to my helmet in a high-tech fashion with duct tape," Nesbitt jokes.

The films will also include footage shot from the top of Vancouver's revolving restaurants, giving a bird's-eye view of a city that's ringed by nature.



Inside SweaterLodge, visitors can power the films by riding the bicycle.

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The architects conceived of every object in the pavilion as multi-functional. The shipping crates and baggage used to transport the exhibition will transform to become pavilion furniture, the sweater becomes a lodge, packs become sofas and bicycles become projectors.



Bill Pechet and Stephanie Robb

That aspect will continue even after the Biennale is over.

SweaterLodge will be recycled into hundreds of tuques and scarves when it returns to Vancouver.

"So the project starts with something small — pop bottles. It becomes this mammoth thing, and then it leaves as quietly as it began, as a series of little things that go out into the community," Robb says.

The 2006 Biennale will be the 10th devoted to architecture. The International Biennale of Art is under way now in the Italian city, showcasing contemporary art from around the world.