

# Tensi<sup>^</sup>et Symposium 2007

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# TENSINET SYMPOSIUM 2007

## Ephemeral Architecture Time And Textiles

Politecnico di Milano  
16th - 18th April 2007

**Marijke Mollaert**

**Alessandra Zanelli**

**Tensinet**

*The Communication  
network  
for tensile structures  
in Europe*



*Politecnico di Milano  
BEST Department  
Faculty of Architecture  
and Society*

with papers of:

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Bernd Stimpfle, Dieter Stroebel, Javier Tejera Parra, Silja Tillner, Hiroshi Toyoda,  
Rosemarie Wagner, Robert Wehdorn-Roithmayr, Alessandra Zanelli*



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# Introduction: the Main Theme of TensiNet Symposium 2007

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The main theme of the TensiNet Symposium 2007 will be Ephemeral Architecture and in particular, the relationship between membrane architecture and the concept of time.

The association of the adjective “ephemeral” with architecture is relatively recent, starting from the “structural revolution of architecture” (René Sarger), which is about “180 generations since man built the Pyramids” (Bruno Zevi).

Ephemeral Architecture describes on the one hand, tensile structures built with lightweight membranes, which respond to the principles of firmness, commodity and delight, distancing themselves from the classical interpretation embodied by everlasting, monumental architecture.

On the other hand, Ephemeral Architecture has always been considered a construction of necessity, a temporary and minimal shelter used by man in ancient times and also today by nomadic peoples. It is a form of architecture which uses lightweight materials such as textiles, local raw materials and construction techniques which can be easily disassembled and transported to create adaptable spaces for different environments and climatic situations.

For these reasons, architectural history books have largely neglected primitive Ephemeral Architecture and likewise Textile Architecture until now. We believe that the moment has come to re-evaluate both Ephemeral and Textile Architecture since they possess characteristics which prove extremely interesting for our non-migratory but ever increasing transient lifestyle.

Since textile architecture has seen a period of great innovation in form, technology and materials in the last fifty years, it's time to take stock of the present situation and propose alternative solutions which are more consistent with a new need for flexibility, a new aesthetic concept and last but not least, new obligatory environmental safeguards.

The objective of the Symposium therefore, is to underline the close relationship between membrane architecture and the concept of time, and to emphasise how this relationship is constantly evolving, giving new life to all ephemeral architectural expressions.

Ephemeral Textile Architecture not only responds to the needs of contemporary society for flexible and lightweight building, but is also the result of an ecological design strategy, where temporary constructions can be disassembled after use, leaving future generations free to decide how to use those spaces again.

The relationship between membrane architecture and the concept of time can be illustrated by the following:

- *textiles and history*: an examination of the origins and evolution of membrane architecture and textile tensile structures;
- *space, time and new needs*: an examination of how membrane architecture responds to new temporary needs and the individual's ever changing concept of work and home;
- *short and long term architecture*: an examination of a new concept of durability, where membrane constructions last only as long as necessary.

These three categories are dealt with in two Parallel Sessions of the Symposium from 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> April 2007 - Building and Environment; New materials and Applications - and in a Poster Session, which will take place in the Guido Nardi exhibition space at the Politecnico di Milano from 10<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> April 2007.

28<sup>th</sup> February 2007

## References

- [1] SARGER R., *Structures nouvelles en architecture*, Centre d'études architecturales, Brussel, 1967.
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