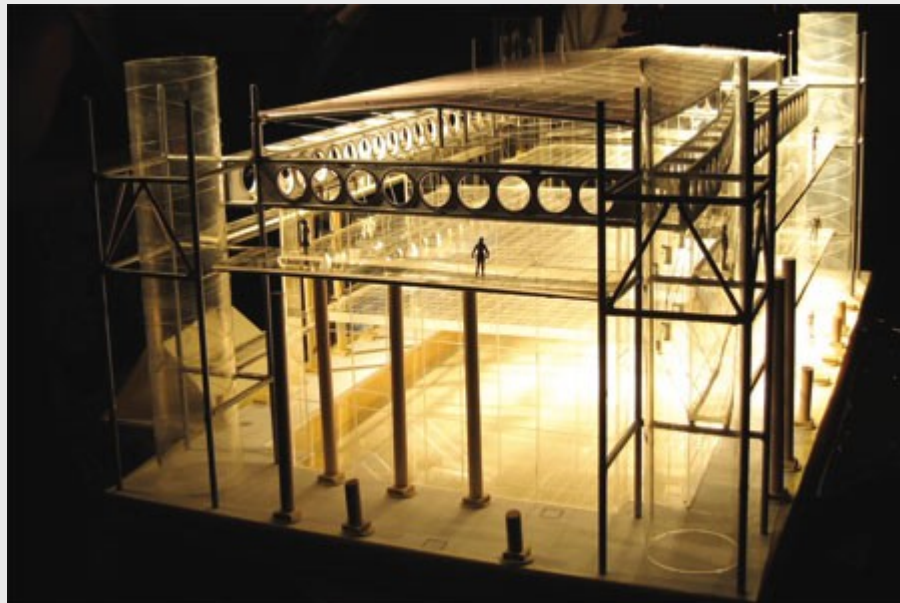


High-tech flexible structure proposed for Opera House site

Justin Camilleri



This is the model being exhibited at St John's Cavalier in Valletta of the concept being proposed.

'Unless we choose to design our future, something or somebody else will design it for us'.

Forget the long-standing controversy about the old Opera House site in Valletta and instead consider one solution being offered.

Here is a proposal that does not strive to be an architectural bravado but rather aims at respecting the many opinions expressed over the past decades.

"Today there is a consensus on a vision to regenerate the Opera House site and to offer the space in a better form to the people," Carlo Schembri, a designer and promoter of the project, said

It is evident, however, that opinions about design and use are many and varied. In the case of design, there are those who prefer seeing the building reflect its original plan and others who would rather see a clean slate approach.

What really matters, however, is what Edward De Bono said, that "unless we choose to design our future, something or somebody else will design it for us".

A solution on offer is to restore the present remains, thus respecting the past, roof the existing floor to gain approximately 1,000 square metres on Republic Street and erect a high-tech flexible

structure with minimum intervention to the present site. This is the idea of Giovanni Trevisan, a Venetian architect who developed the concept over the past four years and has now returned to Malta to exhibit his proposal through the Edward De Bono Foundation.

The undecided may be comforted in the knowledge that the structure he proposes is flexible to the extent that it can be temporary and dismantled in no time.

Alternatively, it can be clad in stone when a consensus on the final design is reached.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the structure is similar to the Grand and Petit Palais in Paris.

Can this be a first step towards a tangible solution? Visitors to the exhibition can express their opinion in the hope of guiding the authorities involved in making a decision.

The proposed project is also being studied together with consultants who are experienced in energy-efficiency characteristics in buildings.

The exhibition, entitled Projects, will remain open to the at St John's Cavalier, Ordnance Street, Valletta, until May 31.

Opening hours are from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mondays to Fridays and from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays.
