

# Report—Berlin

TR2003



**The international workshop on textile structures again dazzles participants**

International attendees gather in front of the Technical University of Berlin for a three-day summer workshop.

## World-wide roofs

Experts and novices in the field of membrane structures from Peru to Italy, Israel to New Zealand, Guatemala to Sweden, and Denmark to Venezuela brought diverse perspectives and experience to share and to inspire at Textile Roofs 2003, the Eighth International Workshop on the Design and Practical Realization of Architectural Membrane Structures. It was an action packed, informative three-day event.

By Ali Heshmati

The most wonderful aspect of the workshop must have been its great diversity of backgrounds and expertise present. Eighty participants, including the presenters, from 23 countries gathered in Berlin. Researchers, professors, engineers, architects, manufacturers, students and artisans brought an interdisciplinary focus to the workshop and made it a memorable and fruitful experience. Berlin seemed to be the perfect spot for the workshop due to its central location and recent building boom.

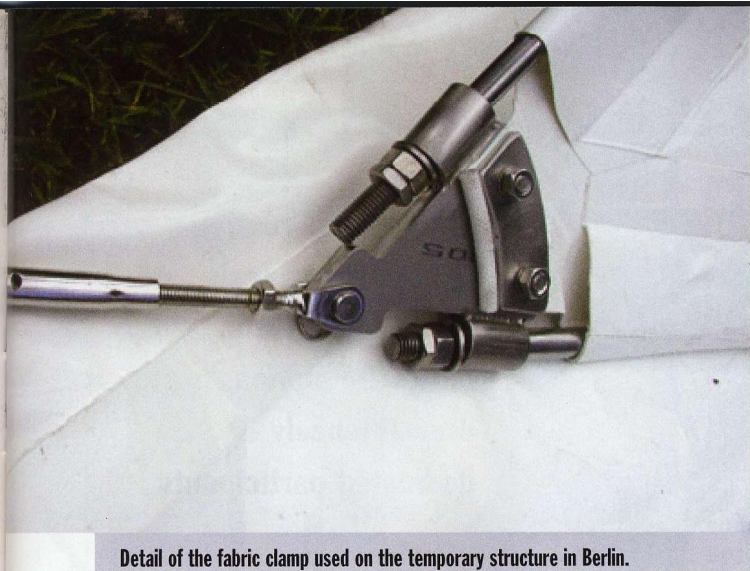
The wisdom of some with overview and personal involvement in the theoretical and technological developments of the last 50 years, coupled with the innovative approaches of a fresh perspective promises a vigorous industry with an innovative future. Under the tutelage of the wise, the youth brought a great creative energy to the workshop. Case studies included the work of British artist Anish Kapoor at the Tate Modern, as well as a more conventional Airport Railway Station of Leipzig/Halle by AP Brunnert Plan GmbH of Stuttgart. "Blob architecture" was present in addition to more traditional and less complex saddle-shaped anticlastic structures.

Although the workshop was well attended, there was one conspicuously missing contingent, both in terms of its contribution and numbers. In February 2003, the Chinese hosted a special session of the Textile Roofs Workshop in Shanghai due to the large numbers in that country interested in practical implementation of membrane structures. "In the membrane structure market, at this moment, there is China and there is the rest of the world," said Erik Moncrieff, emphasizing the size and vigor of this growing market. China promises to be the largest economy engaged extensively in membrane architecture as a viable means of building. The Chinese affair may become a frequent event through the help of the same organizers. This event also attracts other Far-East parties due to its close proximity.

ALI HESHMATI



Attendees helped anchor a stay for the conference tensile structure.



ALI HESHMATI

Detail of the fabric clamp used on the temporary structure in Berlin.

Another party missing in Berlin was that of the United States. Although the U.S. is home to some designers, manufacturers, and fabricators of large membrane structures, there were no representatives from the States at the workshop. The workshop can be a wonderful forum for our students, architects, engineers, manufactures, and industry representatives to learn, teach, and ultimately network with the world of fabric architecture. Dr. Lothar Gründig expressed interest in conducting a workshop in the U.S. if there is adequate interest and organization.

Organized by Professor Dr. Engineer Lothar Gründig of the Technical University, Berlin, and Erik Moncrieff of Technet GmbH, Berlin, and a wonderfully helpful administrative staff, the workshop brought together major forces of industry, manufacturing and scientific sectors to promote and facilitate the design and the practical realization of membrane structures. It is important to stress the distinction between this event as a workshop rather than a symposium or a conference. "Academic conferences continue to be of great value, but they have never attempted to cover many of the practical aspects of textile roof projects which need to be mastered. For example, the critical processes of fabricating and installing textile roofs are rarely discussed at conferences," said Moncrieff. A well-organized and smoothly administered program included lectures in the mornings and hands-on work sessions after lunch. Morning sessions focused on structural, technological, and material characteristics of membranes as well as building methods and design processes. In

the afternoons, three parallel strands offered hands-on fabrication and modeling workshops.

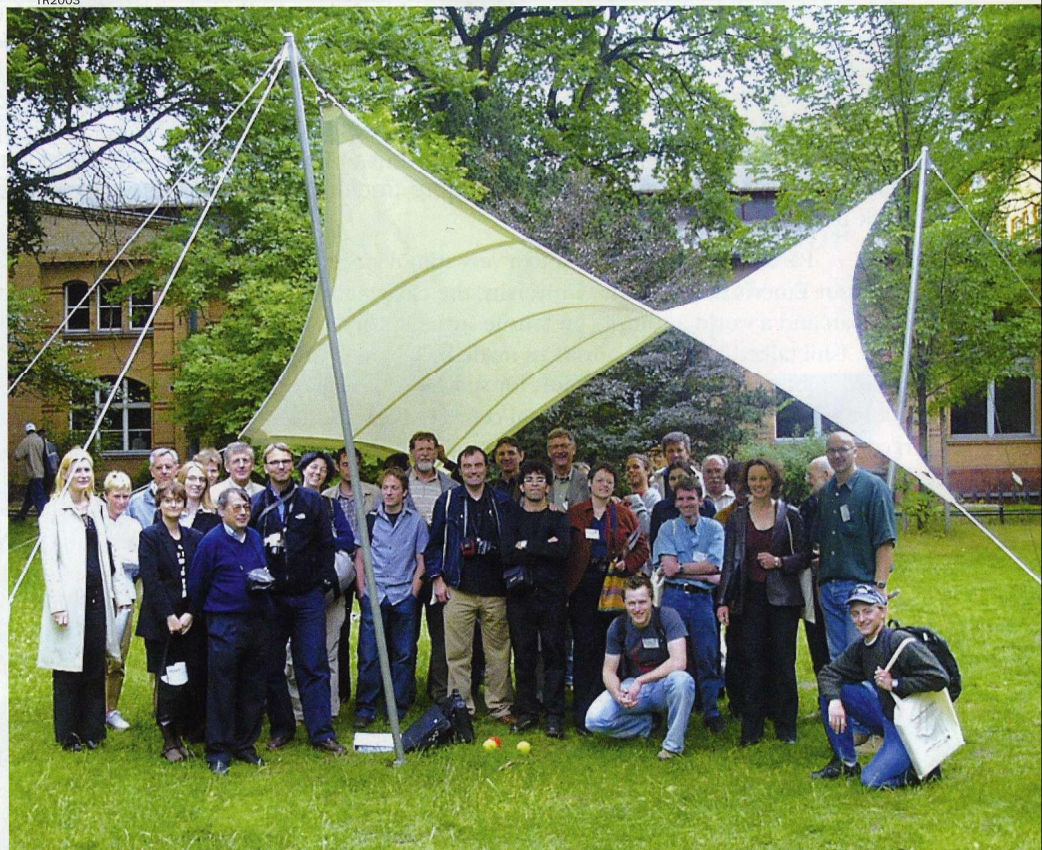
Ingo Lishke, a sailmaker and a master builder with his own firm of Textile Bau GmbH, ran three afternoon sessions consecutively, which culminated in the actualization of a small tensile membrane structure erected on the campus of the Technical University of Berlin. Jürgen W. Hennieke conducted physical modeling workshops where he and a number of modeling enthusiasts worked with soap film and nylon to make small models. There were also computation-modeling sessions, conducted by the experts from Technet.

The days were packed with productive learning and focused organized activities. However, time was allowed for personal interaction as well as cultural enjoyment. The city tour offered an unparalleled view of Berlin through the canals, while the night outings provided a great time for getting to know the individuals of same interest from diverse backgrounds.

The humor and personality of individuals came shining through this rigorously scheduled three-day event. One presenter had everyone in laughter, while another juggled to entertain the crowd. More serious than entertaining, though, the workshop was informative on the artistic edge as well as the practical one. The Textile Roof 2003 workshop ended with the erection of a small membrane structure and friendly exchange of contacts.

Ali Heshmati, an architect and educator with an international practice in Husnes, Norway and Minneapolis, USA, is a contributing editor for *Fabric Architecture*.

TR2003



Looking pleased with themselves, participants in the 2003 Textile Roofs workshop squeezed under the small membrane structure they erected on the last day.