



# INTRODUCING PAVILIONS: BIG WORLDS UNDER LITTLE TENTS

**Joel Robinson**

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Keywords: pavilion, architecture, exhibition, exposition, world's fair, internationalism.

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# INTRODUCING PAVILIONS: BIG WORLDS UNDER LITTLE TENTS

Joel Robinson, *The Open University*

## Abstract

*What is a pavilion? In this issue of the Open Arts Journal we learn that this little-studied type of structure has assumed a diversity of forms and functions, which beg the question of whether the pavilion should be seen as an architectural type at all. This editorial introduction suggests that one way of conceptualizing the pavilion across time and space is as a transient (and often modest) presence in the landscape, one which belies the otherwise rather weighty ideas or positions about the world embodied or put on display there. This thesis is unfolded in various ways in the contributions to this themed issue, which explore pavilions as spaces of display, ornamental eccentricities and experimental prototypes, as well as national monuments of a heraldic or diplomatic kind.*

It may have been possible in the not-too-distant past to dismiss the pavilion (the ‘*pavilloner*,’ as Le Corbusier disparagingly called it) as a minor and inconsequential type of architecture, a frivolous ornament on the landscape. Today, one might find it harder to ignore such architectural spaces – whether they are built for official institutions and international expositions, or conceived by artists as more experimental structures that intervene within a politics of cultural representation. Pavilions are now often front and centre to what

are being called the spaces of global cultures. Hence, it is time that there were more scrutiny of what they are, or what they have been in modern history. Considering the symbolic capital they afford those individuals, organizations or nations that have them constructed, but also the agency they offer those who would seek to challenge consensual culture and raise questions about the use of public space, pavilions might be recognised for what they are: architectural works that may appear trifling (especially next to grander civic monuments), but which are more often than not embattled structures, bound up with claims to power, status and identity, and thus harbouring some rather big ideals or ideas about the world.

## Toward a Genealogy of the Pavilion

As a way of beginning, it might be helpful to try and visualise, for heuristic purposes, a simple genealogy of the pavilion, which would support the above hypothesis. Such a genealogy could be complicated later; this is certainly what the texts that follow this introduction will do. Beginning with the earliest examples, one might call to mind those portable foldaway structures, capable of being set up quickly in the encampments of military campaigns and diplomatic assemblies. In the ancient Roman Empire and beyond, these acquired the name ‘butterflies’ – *papilio* in Latin, from which the modern French *pavillon* derives. This was possibly on account of their fleeting appearance in the landscape, and the way that their canopies appeared to flap in the breeze. Such structures were undoubtedly utilitarian, but they were also heraldic, stately and ornamental, in keeping with their purpose. They continued to be used through the



Figure 0.1: William Kent, Temple of Ancient Virtue, 1734, Stowe Gardens, Buckinghamshire. Photograph: Joel Robinson.



modern period, although the more purely functional tents used in warfare today hardly compare.

Bringing the pavilion more squarely into the sphere of art and culture were the much more festive tents of medieval and renaissance pageantry. Here, different forms and uses were found, to the extent that the image of the pavilion now begins to divide and multiply. As it enters palatial gardens, villa parks and country estates (Figure 0.1), however, the pavilion is still very much tied to power and wealth, as well as to land and territorial claims. This is why, in spite of appearances, it is never entirely uncoupled from its largely patrician and martial associations. It enters the world of the propertied classes with a less obvious pragmatic or diplomatic purpose, more as an embellishment or pleasant diversion. Yet, it is no less meaningful for that. Never reducible to a frivolous addition, the construction of a pavilion usually was (and perhaps still is) motivated by self-aggrandisement, aesthetic speculation, civilizing ritual or political strife of some kind.

By the eighteenth century, parks and gardens were beginning to host a broad range of structures that might (at a stretch) be referred to as pavilions. Europeans were now aware that garden pavilions actually had a much more ancient history outside Europe and Asia Minor, extending to the Far East. Having spent some time in Canton, the architect and former employee of the Swedish East India Company William Chambers enthused: 'No nation ever equaled the Chinese in the splendor and number of their garden structures' (Chambers, 1773, p. 35). Amidst the classical revival, many pavilions now took on the character of more permanent (or quasi-permanent) fixtures in the landscape; some became so monumental, rigid and austere that they lost the sprightliness of butterflies altogether, and transmogrified into something new, not infrequently resembling mausolea more than flamboyant marquees.

Now associated with recreation and entertainment, pavilions held various functions in the 'modern' English-style landscaped parks, and in the increasingly eclectic, fanciful gardens of the Regency and Victorian eras – as a glance at the pattern books of nineteenth-century architects like John Buonarotti Papworth will reveal. They served as lodges, boathouses, gazebos, seats, pergolas, stages, bandstands, conservatories, aviaries and cabinets. They were now built to resemble rustic cottages, Grecian sanctuaries, Gothic follies, or Orientalist exotica – e.g., Turkish kiosks, Moorish fortresses, Indian temples, Chinese pagodas and later Japanese teahouses (**Figures 0.2-0.3**). These last attested not only to the cosmopolitanism of the patron,



Figure 0.2: Giovan Battista Filippo Basile, Pavilion in the Arab-Norman Style, English Gardens, 1850-51, Palermo. Photograph: Joel Robinson.



Figure 0.3: Japanese Pavilion, or Chokushi-Mon (Imperial Envoy's Gateway), 1910-11, Kew Gardens, London. Photograph: Joel Robinson.

but also to imperial aspirations and fantasies of remote times or places. Following the building of the Royal Pavilion at Brighton, the demand for an architecture of leisure in the nineteenth century saw such pavilions taken to the seaside or adapted to the public park for the benefit of a much wider populace.

With modernity came the evolution of an entirely different species of pavilion. This was inseparable from a new culture of exhibition, of spectatorship and spectacle – of the kind that turned all and sundry into consumers. Its dominant form was the exposition space. Consider the Crystal Palace of 1851, effectively a monster pavilion sheltering smaller individual marquees, each advertising the wares of a nation, whether that was Britain, with its exoticised colonial possessions, or one of its continental competitors. From the late nineteenth century onward, nations (colonisers and colonies alike) participating in such international expositions (or world's fairs, as they came to be called in North America) were represented by their own pavilions, built in a wide array of styles intended to reflect a certain image or identity. Thereafter, the architecture of the pavilion was mobilised in events that – as contemporary observers found – were 'not just exhibitions of the world, but the ordering up of the world itself as an endless exhibition' (Mitchell, 1989, p. 218).

The upshot of its co-opting by the world's fair, of course, is that the pavilion was no longer frozen in some make-believe Arcadia, at the disposal of the elite alone. It was now regimented into a suburban grid, and seen by thousands (for a fee, of course), at the pace of Fogg and Passepartout on a whirlwind visit. Gone were the private, contemplative encounter and the picturesque taste of the previous century, which dictated studious placements and perspectives for the pavilion. Aesthetic edification was now less imperative than a didactic or purportedly educational agenda, which barely disguised the role of exposition architecture in the normalization of capitalism. The size of such pavilions became important (especially for Europe's colonial powers), not just to accommodate displays inside, but to impress and outwardly convey authority, legitimacy or identity. This was the age of nation-building after all. It was also the age of empire.

The imagination characteristic of the more fanciful garden buildings of the past (be it the Indian House of 1750 at Augustusburg, the Alhambra of 1758 at Kew Gardens, or the Creaky Pagoda of 1786 at Tsarskoye Selo) found its way into these new exposition façades – in an anticipation of Disneyland *avant la lettre*. Yet, what was in prior times designed to be viewed from calculated vantage points became a panoptic

instrument for directing the movement and vision of much larger numbers of people inside. Of course, some garden pavilions of the past had served as spaces of display, boasting curiosities or sculptures, even living things (e.g., glasshouses, menageries and zoos) on their interiors. But the pavilion was now so closely associated with the displays they contained that the architectural container itself was often demoted to a theatrical set.

Conversely, there were pavilions that actually stole attention away from the exhibits, becoming a lot more memorable than whatever might have been displayed inside. If some world's-fair buildings were attention-getting preambles for the exhibitions they contained, others capitalised on the excuse of an exhibition and the great licence afforded by such temporary events to make bold architectural statements. The Soviet Pavilion at Paris' 1937 Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne; the Roman Pavilions at the 1927 and 1929 Tripoli Trade Fairs organised by Italy; or the Misulgwon Exhibition Building at the 1915 Korean Products Competitive Exhibition organised by Japan, were ironically more lasting precisely on account of their ephemerality.

It was not only belligerent imperialists and fascists that found expositions to be propitious testing grounds for architecturally-staged propaganda. Within the nascent space of these increasingly rather sensational events (and the more specialised trade fairs), the fantasies of the avant-garde were likewise given air to breed. Here too, the pavilion regained some of its older martial connotations, becoming a rather overt polemical instrument – albeit of a very different kind now – in the hands of progressive architects. It could wage war on the establishment, vindicate alternative aesthetic or ideological positions, and respond to changing social circumstances. That buildings like Le Corbusier's 1925 L'Esprit Nouveau, or Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's 1929 Barcelona Pavilion, were isolated events – surrounded by the historicist kitsch, inflated exoticism or corporate vulgarity that typified such fairs – only made this oppositional stance more firm.

In modernist circles, the pavilion became a laboratory for experimentation and for showcasing new forms, materials or techniques. It became a work of pure architecture, dressed up as a housing prototype or model factory. Here was a new pavilion again. More than anything else, it was exhibiting itself, or the potential for architecture to be something else. It was oriented to the future rather than retrospectively dwelling on some antique ideal or mythical Asia. This was the pavilion as architecture's Other, its utopian antagonist, critiquing or propelling it in new directions.



Not surprisingly then, the very image of the pavilion was taken up not only in the domain of leisure but also in utopian projects responding to urgent social needs, becoming the model, for instance, for hospitals and social housing, even for Ernst May's lightweight, open-plan, whitewashed 'pavilion-type' schools in Frankfurt's garden suburbs during the late 1920s (Henderson, 1997).

After the Second World War, the pavilion became the site for some of the most hotly debated tensions in modernist architecture – be it monumentality versus instrumentality, form versus function, regionalism versus universalism, or the local versus the global. The grounds of the Venice Biennale are a case in point; they form a microcosm, whose national pavilions reveal how these tensions played out in the wake of fascism. As the Cold War escalated, utopianism was tempered by realism (e.g., Alison and Peter Smithson's *Patio and Pavilion of 1956*, with Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi); or, conversely, it was made even more delirious by the cybernetic fantasies from Joan Littlewood and Cedric Price's concept of the *Fun Palace* (1964), through the ludic technoscience of Archigram and the architects of Osaka '70, to the engineering poetics of Frei Otto and Renzo Piano (**Figure 0.4**).

What has been referred to by Paul Greenhalgh as a lull in World's Fairs through the "'Post-Modern' decades' (2011, p. 13) meant that the pavilion was more defined by marketing and entertainment venues during the 1980s and 90s. National pavilions at international expositions (Seville in 1992; Hannover in 2000; Shanghai in 2010) (**Figures 0.5-0.6**) made a comeback however, with the resurgence of mega-events (Roche, 2003) amidst a millennial rhetoric of globalization and regeneration, or to mark centenaries in an age where hope often doubles back into the past and away from its own bleak horizon. This is a nostalgia that also drives the heritage industry, prompting the novel and paradoxical activities of pavilion conservation or reconstruction. In 1965, for instance, Gerrit Rietveld's Sonsbeek Pavilion (Arnhem, Netherlands, 1955) was rebuilt; in 1986, Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion was reinstated in the grounds of Montjuic; in 2009, Victor Pasmore's Apollo Pavilion (Peterlee, England, 1968) was restored.

As for what the pavilion has become more recently, it might be premature to say. It is still something like it was before, of course. But new prospects are apparent: recycled containers, squatter tents, emergency shelters, nomadic lodgings, pedagogical exercises, site-specific



Figure 0.4: Renzo Piano Building Workshop, IBM Traveling Pavilion (installed in Amsterdam 1983-86), 1982. Courtesy: Renzo Piano Building Workshop. Photograph: Gianni Berengo Gardin.

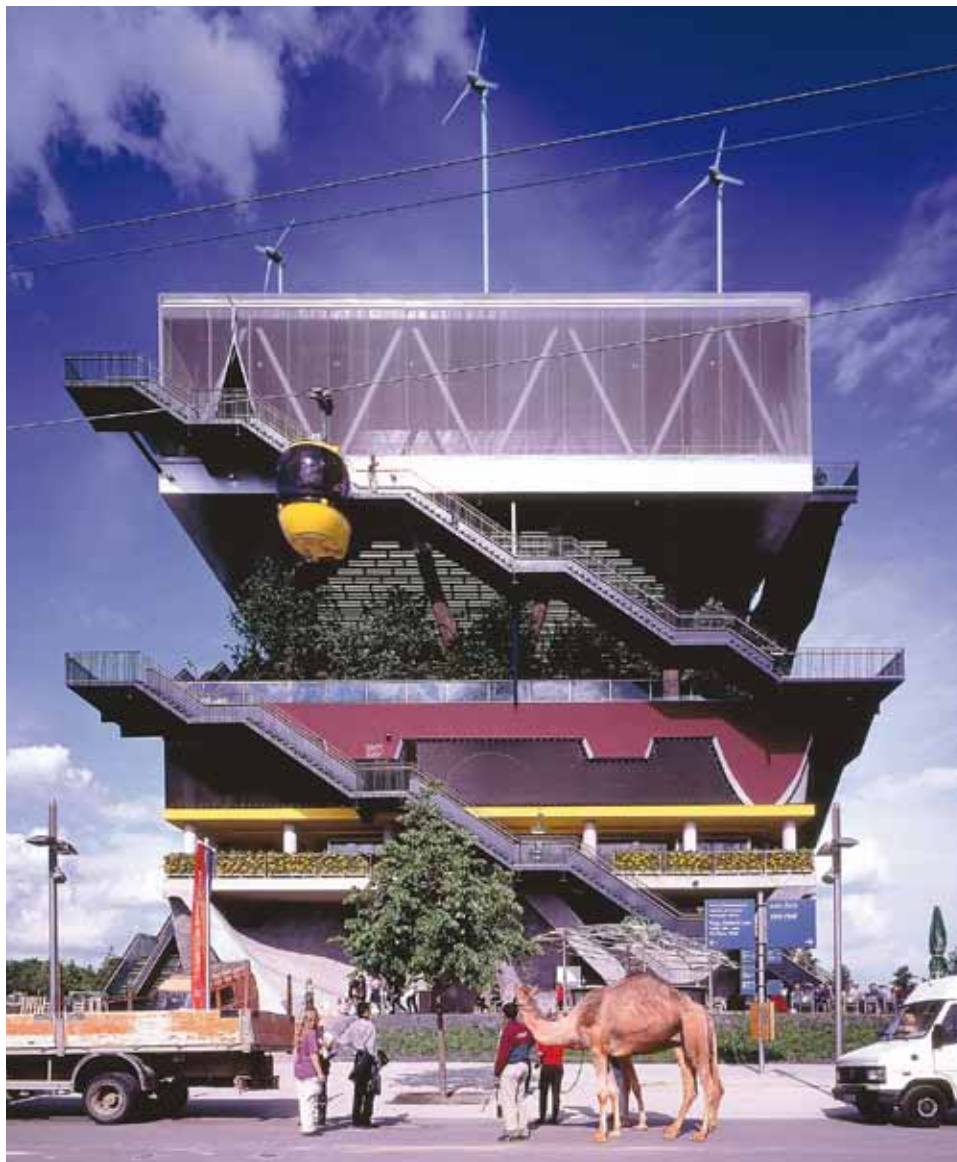


Figure 0.5: MVRDV, Holland Pavilion, Hannover World Exposition 2000. Courtesy of MVRDV.



Figure 0.6: EMBT Architects, Spanish Pavilion, Shanghai Expo 2010. Courtesy of EMBT Architects.



installations, floating theatres, 'smart' machines, VR cubes, internet forums and other hybrid ventures traversing time and space, and registering the ever more itinerant and interconnected experience of twenty-first century affluence. No surprise, then, that the pavilion – as a mobile adaptable device no longer tied down to gardens and fairs – has become

a popular 'medium' for many contemporaries (e.g., Monika Sosnowska, Shigeru Ban, Matali Crasset, Atelier Bow-Wow, Dré Wapanaar, Atelier van Lieshout, Xefirotarch, Ernesto Neto, Marco Casagrande, Eko Prawoto, EXYZT) working at the interface of art and architecture (**Figures 0.7-0.10**).



Figure 0.7: Monika Sosnowska, I:I, 2007, steel. Courtesy of the artist, Foksal Gallery Foundaton, The Modern Institute, Galerie Gisela Capitain, Kurimanzutto, and Hauser & Wirth.



Figure 0.8: Shigeru Ban and Jean de Gastines, Hermès Pavilion, 2011, Design Tide Exhibition, Tokyo. Courtesy of Shigeru Ban Architects.





Figure 0.9: Matali Crasset, Feral House/Le Nichoir (Maison Sylvestre), 2011, Le Vents de Forêts Contemporary Art Program, Fresnes au Mont, Bois de Paroches, Lorraine. Courtesy of Matali Crasset Productions. Photograph: Lucas Fréchine.



Figure 0.10: Atelier Bow-Wow and SDM Architects, BMW Guggenheim Lab Mumbai, 2012-2013, Mahim Beach, Mumbai, Courtesy of the BMW Guggenheim Lab and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation. Photograph: UnCommonSense.



## A place for reflection

What is a pavilion? Since no single answer to this question satisfies, perhaps all one can do is raise it, or consider the terms through which an answer – or answers in the plural – might be tentatively approached. Part of the reason for asking the question is to sidestep the more directly obvious answers, and ensure some pause for reflection. It is not really the aim here to gather together a number of plausible responses, or to have the sum of the contents make up an answer, so much as to keep the question open. In that respect, this volume of texts might itself be said to take on the character of a meta-pavilion<sup>1</sup> – or a provisional and loosely-bounded forum at any rate – for starting to reflect on what pavilions are, what they have been and could become.

What the above account of the pavilion's genealogy reveals (while shallow on historical specificity or detail) is that the pavilion is not static. It is not a single unchanging type; in fact, it is not a type at all. The pavilion is not only an amorphous thing, adapting to several forms and functions, but is also responsive to changes in its geographical and historical environments. If, for instance, my opening account collapses history into a simple diachronic narrative, the papers collected for this issue of the *Open Arts Journal* paint a more elaborate picture. They will attest to the diversity of forms and functions that pavilions have assumed over several recent centuries, and investigate the various social and geographical contexts in which they have been built and used.

The pavilion has taken on all manner of forms and functions from the marquees of crusader-era Palestine, to Inigo Jones' stone China House (c. 1655) at Beckett Hall in Oxfordshire, to the showy structures of the 2010 Shanghai Expo (to take three, not entirely arbitrary reference points). But even so, there is a shared sense of what a pavilion is, captured in some of the following adjectives: smallish, ephemeral, lightweight, adaptable, subsidiary, contingent, peripatetic, makeshift, ceremonial, pleasant, ornamental, fantastic, playful, enchanting, hybrid, experimental, inventive.

There may yet be something of a common thread though. For, beneath the pavilion's often diminutive canopies are found some rather big ideas about the world. Indeed, it is one of the several internal contradictions that distinguishes the pavilion from

<sup>1</sup> This would of course not be the first time that a publication has been likened to a pavilion; to take just one example, the online publication *Pavilion: Journal for Politics and Culture* ([www.pavilionmagazine.org](http://www.pavilionmagazine.org)) – which since 2001 has served as a venue for various kinds of texts and artistic projects – makes this point quite literal.

other structures, in that while it often masquerades as a modest or innocuous amusement, it is in fact a highly rhetorical and discursive thing, not least due to its age-old exhibitionary rationale and global orientation. The extent to which pavilions give shelter to competing visions of the world – embattled microcosms of a kind – is for now an open question, and readers are ultimately left to make up their own minds about this hypothesis. Bearing in mind Ian Hamilton Finlay's embattled *Temple of Apollo* (Figure 0.11), however, we might find that this poet's polemics in respect to gardens apply no less to pavilions: 'Certain gardens are described as retreats when they are really attacks' (Finlay, 1992, p. 38).

In the call for contributions to this volume, authors were not directed to engage with a particular period, location or type of pavilion. They were allowed instead the freedom to ponder the pavilion on their own terms, from their own specialisms, be it art history, material culture, visual arts, architectural design, museum studies, curatorial work or heritage



Figure 0.11: Ian Hamilton Finlay, *Temple of Apollo* at Little Sparta, 1980, Stonypath, near Edinburgh. Courtesy of the Wild Hawthorn Press and the Estate of Ian Hamilton Finlay. Photograph: Joel Robinson

conservation. Even so, there was an emphasis on use and social function, if only to get away from the mere admiration of form characterizing glossier architectural publications. It was hoped, by asking the question ‘what is a pavilion?’, that a range of perspectives – social-historical, geopolitical, postcolonial, iconographical, pedagogical – could be brought to bear, not so much on formulating a definitive answer but on revealing how little has been done to raise the question itself.

While much has been written about specific buildings like the Barcelona Pavilion or L’Esprit Nouveau, little has been said about the pavilion *tout court*. Little thought has been given to what the pavilion is in more generic terms, as a type, category, medium, space – or whatever it might be. Studies of garden structures and exhibition buildings are plentiful, and there has been some consideration of mobile, small or temporary architecture (Kronenburg, 1996; Slavid, 2007; Siegal, 2008; Jodidio, 2011) in illustrated catalogues that furnish a more promotional literature. However, the emphasis is almost always elsewhere, such that the question of what pavilions are is taken for granted or falls to the wayside of other interests and concerns (e.g., aesthetic form, structural and material innovation, portable design, representational value).

A broader critical discourse on the pavilion does not exist. It seems that historians, critics and architects of the past have often slighted the pavilion, associating it with elitist pleasure, or a negligible capriciousness, as if it smacked too much of kitsch, especially from

the universal expositions onward. Indeed, some of the most audible and high-minded voices of modernity were dismissive. John Ruskin’s criticism of Joseph Paxton’s Great Exhibition Building, that it had merely ‘magnified a conservatory’ (Ruskin, 1854, p. 5), is well known; his equation of architecture with permanence and remembrance made the pavilion a trifling thing. In the French context, Auguste Perret declared that a tent was not architecture (Udovicki-Selb, 1997, p. 56); his more influential pupil, Le Corbusier, spoke derogatorily of the ‘*pavilloner*’ (p. 58) – in spite of his well-known and strategic use of pavilions to proselytise a new spirit in the design of domestic and urban habitation.

It could be that this condescension toward architecture’s Other accounts for the short shrift that it has generally been given. As noted above, outside of garden history, a burgeoning literature on fairs, and a more recent vogue for mobile, small or temporary architecture in a time of diplomatic, climatic and economic crises, little evaluative work has been directed toward the subject of pavilions. Where this may be changing is in the resuscitation of the international exposition as a platform for architectural innovation, horticultural exhibitions and programmes like the Serpentine Pavilion (**Figures 0.12-0.16**), as well as the explosion of curatorial studies that have conspired to generate new interest. In 2009, Frankfurt’s Deutsches Architekturmuseum mounted a show, *The Pavilion: Pleasure and Polemic in Architecture*, signaling an emergent trend that is also noticeable in a few recent



Figure 0.12: Serpentine Gallery (formerly a refreshment pavilion), with Jean Nouvel’s 2010 Serpentine Pavilion, Kensington Gardens, London. Courtesy of the Serpentine Gallery. Photograph: Joel Robinson.





Figure 0.13: Daniel Libeskind, with Arup, Serpentine Pavilion (Eighteen Turns), 2001, Kensington Gardens, London. Courtesy of the Serpentine Gallery. Photograph: Stephen White.



Figure 0.14: Álvaro Siza, and Eduardo Souto de Moura, with Cecil Balmond, Serpentine Pavilion, 2005, Kensington Gardens, London. Courtesy of the Serpentine Gallery. Photograph: James Winspear.



Figure 0.15: Rem Koolhaas and Cecil Balmond, Serpentine Pavilion, 2006, Kensington Gardens, London. Courtesy of the Serpentine Gallery. Photograph: John Offenbach.



Figure 0.16: Peter Zumthor, with Piet Oudolf, Serpentine Pavilion 2012, Kensington Gardens, London. Courtesy of the Serpentine Gallery. Photograph: Joel Robinson.



essays probing the topic of pavilions (Curtis, 2006; Bergdoll, 2009; Bussman, 2009; Hirsch, 2009; Colomina, 2009; Phillips, 2010; Lavin, 2012).<sup>2</sup>

What this issue on pavilions offers is a chance to extend, consolidate and deepen reflection on what kind of things pavilions are. As will become apparent, a leading emphasis is on what might be called 'the architecture of display,' and the way in which pavilions set out different worlds or competing visions of the world. While some contributors are concerned with the pavilion as an object or work of art in its own right, displaying itself, others home in on its contents. This interest in what the container contains is welcome. It indicates how the meaning of the word *pavilion* has shifted to encompass the curatorial product that it presents on the inside. It moreover serves as a corrective to a blinkered awe of pavilions for their outwardly spectacular visual effects, and helps ground discussion in a consideration of their use and their social and ideological milieus.

The accent here is deliberately on the twentieth century and contemporary age; yet all of the authors are aware that the pavilion has a longer richer legacy, and at least one of them offers a more historical case. Chronological order is secondary here, and the usual hierarchical split into more polished essays on the one hand and shorter exploratory reviews, statements and commentaries on the other (or worse, academic and non-academic texts) is relaxed in favour of a more thematic organization. The issue starts with essays that introduce key historical topics, then moves to address pavilions as exhibitional mechanisms, before ending with coverage of exciting, recent experiments in the making, use and 'afterlife' of pavilions. It is hoped that this forum might contribute to the lively discussions in that 'place between' art and architecture (Rendell, 2006), where questions of public space and civic participation are brought to the fore.

<sup>2</sup> For proof of this trend, one does not need to look too far past the Serpentine Pavilion programme, founded in 2000 by Julia Peyton-Jones (and Hans-Ulrich Obrist), director of London's Serpentine Gallery. In 2008, Baroness Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza launched her own project with the intention of commissioning art pavilions for different locations around the world. Such competitions, like the one organised by Natalie Seroussi in 2007 on the grounds of the Paris architect André Bloc's estate in Meudon, are becoming more common. In a project that will restructure the map of contemporary art, the Guggenheim Foundation is presently financing the construction of nineteen biennial pavilions on the island of Saadiyat in Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates). Finally, the annual programme recently launched by the Royal Pavilion at Brighton, *Pavilion Contemporary*, will commission artists to make works responding to this site and its architecture.

## Historical themes and contexts

The texts gathered in this first section are wide-ranging, both geographically and temporally. They are a means to set up a discussion about pavilions – the forms they have taken, the functions they have served, the meanings attributed to them, and the values placed upon them (even after they have been dismantled). It introduces a number of the antinomies internal to the pavilion, which make the various offspring of the *papilio* so very hard to pin down. One such antinomy has already been introduced, and refers to how the relatively entertaining and innocent deportment of the pavilion often belies much more pompous intentions and suspect representational claims.

In 'Not months but moments: Ephemerality, monumentality and the pavilion in ruins,' Ihor Junyk ponders the significance of another incongruity, that of the comparatively temporary aspect of pavilions in earlier picturesque gardens versus the air of permanence often sought at the universal expositions of the late nineteenth century – where it was all about projecting 'eternity in an hour' (Tenorio Trillo, 1996, p. 7). He suggests that a desire for reconciling these led to *fin-de-siècle* fantasies of destruction and ruin (far from functionalist emblems of a *Zeitgeist*). A more macabre instantiation of this was Albert Speer's German Pavilion for Paris' 1937 Exposition. The lighter, transient pavilions of the present day, e.g., the Serpentine Pavilions, are construed as a sobering rejoinder to that pathological cult of monumental classicism.

Also inherent in the history of pavilions, as the texts in this section (including Junyk's overview) bring to light, are the tensions between the retrospective and the progressive, past and future, dreams of remote times and visions of new orders, Arcadia and Utopia, classical and avant-garde. Pavilions might embody the vernacular or the universal, the exotic or the norm. They can become ornament or instrument, an object in itself or a receptacle for something else. This is not to say that the pavilion has to be one or the other, in mutually exclusive terms. What the pavilion discloses is the relativism of these terms – their slipperiness and the contingency of their meaning.

The next two essays more clearly adumbrate the notion of an 'architecture of display.' They are included here because their authors are less interested in objects put on display than in their architecture. Jane Lomholt's 'At the bottom of the garden: The caffeaus of the Villa Albani' takes us back to eighteenth-century Rome, the foremost destination on the Grand Tour, and to a less familiar kind of pavilion, one whose present state of decay has overshadowed its original purpose. This was a leisurely café attached to an Italian villa and

its formal gardens, but not just any coffee house: this doubled as a monumental hall for the display of its antiquarian owner's collections, which were overseen by the celebrated expert Johann Joachim Winckelmann. Not only was this pavilion instrumental in confirming Cardinal Albani's knowledge, entitlement and lineage, but anticipated the exhibitionary architecture of the next century.

'Folkloric modernism: Venice's Giardini della Biennale and the geopolitics of architecture' takes us further north in Italy, to the Veneto, and those public gardens laid out under Napoleon. From the end of the nineteenth century, these were effectively turned into an outdoor museum of pavilions, promulgating the cultural potency of Europe's chief nations. Crammed with buildings in all styles, these gardens would have horrified eighteenth-century spectators who complained about the placement of pavilions of different styles being too close together (Hirschfeld, 1779, p. 289). Here, Joel Robinson is less concerned with aesthetic judgements than postcolonial identities. He shows that the architectural landscape of the world's oldest and largest international exposition of art becomes reconfigured in the post-fascist 1950s and 60s through the addition of national pavilions that show up the 'folkloric' nature of architectural modernism.

Also treating the theme of folklore is Jaimee Comstock-Skipp's essay, 'From the world's fair to Disneyland: Pavilions as temples.' It explains how the typology of the 'temple-pavilion' (exploited in the crowd-pulling colonial and empire expositions of the first half of the century) served as the model for one of Disneyland's most recent rides, namely the *Indiana Jones Adventure: Temple of the Forbidden Eye*, which opened to the public in 1995. Incidentally, amusement parks had been incorporated in the grounds of world's fairs early on, but this is a case of the former incorporating the exotic architectural fantasy of the latter. Comstock-Skipp's deliberation on the temple-pavilion is a reminder that the architectural representation of Asia (i.e., not-Europe) at the World's Fairs was no less a spectacular fiction than the 'Disney Pavilion' itself.

The architect Karolina Szynalska's commentary on a little building referred to as the *Papilio* at Markham Moor (on the A1, Britain's longest road) brings us back to some of the themes with which this section began. It also raises questions about heritage and the conservation of structures that were only ever meant to be ephemeral. Discussing this butterfly-shaped roadside hyperbolic paraboloid – which went from serving as a petrol station to a franchise restaurant – she brings to mind Le Corbusier and Edgar Varèse's earlier and better known but no-longer-extant

Philips Pavilion (also a 'hypar') for the 1958 Brussels Exposition. Szynalska also shows how contemporary nostalgia can transmute modernism's most fleeting projects into a kind of industrial picturesque.

### The architecture of display

Ever since the universal exposition saw nations split away from exhibiting their wares together in a single building that was constructed more on the scale of a palace, and erect their own temporary pavilions, the main use of the pavilion has arguably been as a venue of display. This was what Henry-Russell Hitchcock identified as 'exposition architecture' in 1936, on the eve of New York's 'World of Tomorrow' World's Fair. It was at the 1867 Exposition Universelle in Paris that individual national pavilions were first seen, establishing a tradition that is still evident at such mega-events today. The pavilion is now no longer an object (if it ever was just that), but a receptacle; any consideration of it must now pay attention as much to what it contains as to the thing doing the containing. It is this tension that the papers collected here, in this next section, explore.

This section begins with a short reflection on Penelope Curtis's study of the relationship between modern architecture and sculpture; a relationship that she sees as effectively dissolved in the pavilion. The pavilion is not just a place for sculpture, e.g., Georg Kolbe's *Morning* (1925) in Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion, but is a work of sculpture in its own right – albeit 'sculpture in the expanded field' (Krauss, 1979). Here Brian Hatton, is interested in the way that container (architecture) and contained (sculpture) are conflated in projects like the Smithsons' above-mentioned *Patio and Pavilion* (with Henderson and Paolozzi), and later in the American context, with Dan Graham's series of glass pavilions.

Observing how the Barcelona pavilion served to create both a 'vitrine' and 'stage' for sculpture, Hatton elaborates on Curtis' argument. He suggests that what Graham (and Mies van der Rohe before him) made obvious is that pavilions are both viewing lenses and performative spaces in which members of the audience become both subject and object. They are participants that, in rendering superfluous the addition of figurative sculptures to a pavilion, replace the role of statuary in its job of activating the space of the architectural work. The question of participation in the ostensibly public spaces opened up by pavilions as works of public art is incidentally a topic over which much skepticism has recently been expressed (Phillips, 2010; Lavin, 2012). This is a topic to which I return in connection with a discussion of the contemporary pavilion below.



The relation between container and contained is by no means a simple dichotomy. This is underscored by the fact that pavilions have just as often been the main object on display. This was certainly the case at those more specialised events, such as the Milan Triennale or Deutscher Werkbund exhibitions<sup>3</sup> – events that were also a reminder that, even before the expositions and fairs, pavilions themselves were things to be put on display. Just as buildings like Bruno Taut's Glashaus (Cologne, 1914) were shown in modern exhibition parks (for the purpose of promoting new styles), so too were Georgian garden pavilions 'curated,' their placements and visual prospects deliberated upon in treatises and terms that in some ways presaged the idea of an open-air museum. Thus, the pavilion as a work of art – something that puts itself on display – was certainly nothing new to the twentieth century.

What is it, though, that pavilions put on display? Beyond themselves, and beyond the artworks or assorted trinkets shown inside them, what is it that they exhibit? In the case of one very seminal exhibition of 1933, as Flavia Marcello writes in 'Fascism, middle class ideals and holiday villas at the 5<sup>th</sup> Milan Triennale,' what might have been displayed was a utopian vision of social reform, targeted at those in a position to improve their status or standing. In spite of the relative autonomy that their individual architects may have exercised, the modernist housing prototypes encountered here amounted to a very different kind of propaganda than the supranational kind found in world's-fair pavilions.

The next paper picks up on questions now being raised about European representations of former colonies at expositions. Jennifer Way's essay, "'A bazaar in the coliseum": Marketing Southeast Asian handicrafts in New York, 1956,' is a probing social historical account of the Vietnamese Pavilion during a trade exhibit that took place at a recently-opened New York convention centre built in the 'international style.' She discusses the attempts to create the atmosphere of an oriental bazaar there and turns to Edward Said's classic analysis of the politics of representing the East, bringing it to bear on a dissection of the Vietnamese Pavilion and its significance within the escalating political drama of the Cold War.

Beccy Kennedy's contribution, 'Pavilioning Manchester: Boundaries of the local, national and global

<sup>3</sup> Some of the other trade shows that put architecture on display through the construction of pavilions might include the Leipzig International Building Exhibition (1913), the Exhibition for Unknown Architects in Berlin and Weimar (1919), the New Building exhibition in Berlin (1920), the Berlin Secession Exhibition (1923), the Turku Exhibition (1929), the Stockholm Exhibition of Industrial Art (1930).

at the Asia Triennial,' continues this interrogation of the ways in which the Orient has been represented in the Western hemisphere. However, her subject is contemporary (or twenty-first-century) art and artists from all over Asia, and particularly art that raises questions of how a city like Manchester can come to function as a platform – indeed, as a kind of 'pavilion,' in the expanded sense of this term – for communicating the complex movements and identities that delineate the place of Asia within such a metropolitan locale. Kennedy reviews the 2008 and 2011 triennial exhibitions, critiquing their shortcomings, in order to suggest how alternative curatorial positions might move away from the model of national pavilions, and mediate Asia in Manchester more sensitively.

The politics of representation also concerns the next essay included here, which returns the reader to the question of pavilions at the Venice Biennale. Wendy Asquith's assessment of the first Haitian pavilion at 54<sup>th</sup> Biennale in 2011, which was called *ILLUMInations*, enriches the discussion of the architecture of display from the angle of curatorship. Her contribution is titled: 'Haiti's first national pavilion at the Venice Biennale: Anachronism or illuminating opportunity?' She notes the spate of criticism that the Biennale has suffered in recent decades, on account of its Eurocentrism as well as the rather archaic ideas about nationhood that it embodies. Asquith suggests that any effort to supplement this with representation of the art of former colonies like Haiti will be seen as equally fraught or outdated. Be that as it may, even so, she raises the question of whether this does not present curators with the opportunity to illuminate or expose the Biennale's structural foundations with a view to challenging them.

In their statement about the Dallas Pavilion, Jaspas Joseph-Lester and Michael Corris remind us of another challenge to the conservative structure of the Biennale in recent years. For the 2013 Biennale, dubbed *The Encyclopedic Palace*, they have curated a city pavilion. Yet, they have done this in the form of a little book, which is intentionally contrasted with the big, vast 'non-places' that characterise Texas. 'The Dallas Pavilion' follows on from other pavilions that have pitted cities against the nation-based organization of this exposition. Yet it is presented as printed matter, as a catalogue or document of the city's seminal 'art spaces' and the works, activities and trends hosted by them. This pavilion-cum-book considers how location is embedded in the thinking and creative output of Dallas-based artist, curators, educators, museum directors and critics. Opting for a book over a building, as a space that facilitates alternative curatorial strategies, Corris

and Joseph-Lester's 'pavilion' evokes Victor Hugo's prophecy about the decline of architecture in the age of print; here, that prophecy would seem to be brought to bear more specifically on the pavilion.

### Contemporary projects

The final section raises more pointed questions about the contemporary pavilion and its continued meaningfulness for architectural culture. Not everyone is optimistic. This is not for lack of imagination in design, but skepticism as to the politics and public dimension of the pavilion. Despite the formalist wizardry to which pavilions have played host over the last few decades, there may, in the end, not be a whole lot more to them than chic advertisement or auteurial posturing. If the pavilion could still communicate the utopianism or optimism of social transformation in the immediate post-war era, things appear to have moved on since then. In contemporary pavilions – be it the annual Serpentine commissions or the Guggenheim biennial buildings under construction on Saadiyat Island (Abu Dhabi) – whatever optimism that remains appears to be all on the surface.

In 'Pavilion Politics,' an essay of 2010 that responds to the Serpentine commissions, the curator Andrea Phillips advanced a critique of the contemporary pavilion. (Not incidentally, she was writing in the year that saw Jean Nouvel build his neo-Constructivist pavilion, which tipped its sunshade – so to speak – at the bright red follies of Paris' Parc de la Villette, but otherwise fell quite short of Bernard Tschumi's ludic anarchism.) For Phillips, the Serpentine pavilions merely aestheticise, in built form, what is already all too often a questionable rhetoric of *outreach, impact and participation* in arts policy. While the pavilions of 'star architects' like Hadid, Nouvel, Frank Gehry and Daniel Libeskind capitalise on the avant-garde language to which they pay tribute, all they really do is stage 'social engagement' or engineer a 'scenography of democratic participation' (Phillips, 2010, p. 114) in a way that entirely belies the 'transposable commodification,' 'transnational branding' and 'privatized space' (p. 106) of which they are really representative.

Writing in 2012, Sylvia Lavin finds that the ubiquity of pavilions in the contemporary landscape is little more than a sign of their 'exhaustion' and 'enfeeblement.' The pavilions of Greg Lynn and Jürgen Mayer, or any of the Serpentine buildings, signal little more than the 'pavilion's fall from project to party décor' (Lavin, 2012, p. 214). The teleological thrust and social urgency of examples like L'Esprit Nouveau and the Barcelona Pavilion show up the inconsequentiality of the contemporary pavilion as a 'politically eviscerated shed'

(p. 218). 'By contrast,' Lavin declares with a kind of Tafurian melancholy, 'today's pavilions are for the most part vestigial adaptations'; they 'are no longer proleptic, having lost any connection to an advanced cultural or historical project' (p. 213). To be sure, she permits some exceptions: those self-reflexive projects in which artists take the lead in collaborating with architects on works that intervene in reified social relations.<sup>4</sup>

Whether one agrees or not with these critical positions, it is against this budding debate about the contemporary pavilion that the projects covered in this section might be considered. The texts included here look at some recent examples in the creation, use and dismantling of pavilions. Save for Sophie Kazan's review of Zaha Hadid's Mobile Art Pavilion (MAP) – a touring exhibition building designed in 2006, eventually permanently installed in the grounds of Paris' Institute of the Arab World – all of these contributions are written by the architects or artists themselves. Generally, these are shorter texts, with the exception of Chris Tucker's essay on the recent 'deconstruction' of the Children's Art Pavilion (1996) in Newcastle, Australia; in addition to being a description of the project, this last paper raises poignant aesthetic and moral questions in respect to temporary structures, which have 'lived' among a community for some time but are slated for demolition.

In contrast with the dazzling curves and sleek planes of Hadid's Mobile Art Pavilion, Yam Lau and Michael Yuan's 'mobile display unit' for the Donkey Institute of Contemporary Art (DICA) represents an on-going low-budget collaboration, which assumes its meaning in a peripatetic activity involving chance encounters and the participation of passers-by and local communities.

4 Despite their criticism, Phillips and Lavin would probably not have engaged with the debates around public art opened up by contemporary pavilions had the Serpentine programme not existed, and had they not felt something was salvageable in such initiatives. Phillips seems more favourably disposed toward the symbolic value of projects like OMA's *Image of Europe*, a tent built in Brussels in 2004 for an exhibition sponsored by the European Union; or the perceptual experience fostered by David Adjaye and Olafur Eliasson's *Your Black Horizon*, a pavilion that debuted at the 2007 Venice Biennale. Lavin, for her part, concedes that 'the pavilion's displacement from its privileged position of prolepsis has made new options available' (p. 218). She cites the collaborative experiments of Thomas Demand (e.g., *Nagelhaus*, 2007-2010, built under a viaduct in Zurich with the assistance of Caruso St. John Architects), as well as François Roche and Stéphanie Levaux of R&Sie (e.g., *Hybrid Muscle*, 2004, built on the invitation of Philippe Parreno, who used it as the stage-set for his film *Boys from Mars*, at Rirkrit Tiravanija and Kamin Lerdchaiprasert's Land Foundation, near Chiang Mai, in northern Thailand).



Lau's personable photo-essay tells the story of the artists harnessing a bespoke kiosk to a donkey and crossing from rural territories into the streets of Beijing. It is an 'asinine' gesture, not only provocative in its deadpan humor (mocking the borders of art institution and city periphery alike), but reminiscent of the nomadic movements of peoples, both in the past and the present. When the donkey is not stopped by police or harassed otherwise, audiences cluster around it to watch videos or browse pamphlets. This unplanned social interaction and its documentation is a crucial part of the work, a form of ethnological investigation of the everyday sphere, serving as a spur to other 'happenings' in more contentious or relaxed spaces.

Equally collaborative and interactive are Sarah Bonnemaison and Robin Muller's 'warming hut' for a skating oval at the 2011 Canada Games in Halifax (Nova Scotia) and Harriet Harriss' Ping-Pong Pavilion built with students from Montana State University and Oxford Brookes University for the 2012 London Festival of Architecture. Although very different in form, materials and usage, both projects happily underscored the importance of sport in the history of pavilions. Whereas the Architextiles Lab's pavilion sought to blend the hand-crafted with hi-tech electronic interfacing and smart materials that responded to the body's presence, Harriss' project was more interested in demonstrating how to take controlled risks by allowing the rules of a game (ping-pong in this case) to dictate certain decisions in design. Vital to both structures is the kind of innovation that takes place through play and participation, and to which the pavilion is especially conducive.

These project statements and reflections offer a sense of the sundry forms and functions that pavilions might take today. They range from being officially authorised, expensively funded and well-crafted buildings to interventionist, grassroots and makeshift experiments. Having a decidedly more urban than rural setting, they are community-oriented, not simply fabricating a

scenography of public space but asserting the praxis of engagement, participation and collectivity more persuasively. They demonstrate how the pavilion, as a structure that converges on exhibitionary architecture, might be adapted to the local character of places, or redefined with a view to different publics. For these reasons, projects like Tucker's Children's Art Pavilion, which existed as an umbrella for the Newcastle Art Gallery's programme for widening participation, seem to be worlds apart from the 'party décor' pavilions erected in London's Kensington Gardens every summer.

Just a stone's throw from the lake laid out in 1730 by Queen Caroline, and the former site of the Crystal Palace, the Serpentine Pavilions indeed attract all the advantages of a populous world city, while benefiting from the green setting in which such buildings were traditionally accommodated. They are a barometer of the latest vogue, and are undeniably of superb imagination. Certainly, the programme is good advertising for its sponsors, as well as the established architects chosen to stamp their signatures – if only momentarily, for one season – on a moneyed West End landscape. Yet, what the programme does (or has the potential to do) is raise the very question *what is a pavilion?* – and *whither the pavilion?* It does this from a more visible prospect, and maybe throwing up questions about public art and public space is its most important achievement.

Already, however, a counter-discourse has begun to surface in more self-critical projects, which tend to be less well-funded, unofficial, sometimes even legally questionable, and always provocative (**Figures 0.17-0.19**). The experimental architectural collective raumlaborberlin's *The World is Not Fair – The Great World's Fair 2012*, conceived together with the theatre company Hebbel am Ufer (HAU), challenged the



Figure 0.17: Paolo W. Tamburella, *Djahazi*, 2009, cargo vessel and shipping container, serving as the pavilion of the Cormoros Islands at the 53<sup>rd</sup> Venice Biennale. Courtesy of Paolo W. Tamburella.



Figure 0.18: Sanjeev Shankar, *Jugaad Canopy*, 2010, oil cans, public art installation in Rajokri, New Delhi. Courtesy of Studio Sanjeev Shankar. Photograph: Sundeep Bali and Adam Roney.



Figure 0.19: Alex Hartley, *The Mobile Cabinet of Curiosities and Embassy of Nowhereisland*, stationed in Newquay Harbour, Cornwall, United Kingdom, 2012, mixed media. Photograph: Joel Robinson.



spectacle of global expositions with the installation of fifteen makeshift pavilions (**Figures 0.20-0.22**). They brought real issues to the table – via theatre, performance and video – instead of disguising the violence, disorder and unevenness of the world beneath the sham magniloquence of international peace and prosperity. ‘What will be exhibited is not the world as it is or should be, but how we perceive, understand, and interpret it’ (raumlaborberlin and Hebbel am Ufer, 2012), wrote the organisers.

Erected in Berlin’s Tempelhofer Park, a former airfield of historic importance on account of its use

during the Second World War, the pavilions of the *Great World’s Fair 2012* sought ‘to examine ideas, systems, and phenomena by which even the most outlying cultures are now globally connected with each other’ (raumlaborberlin and Hebbel am Ufer, 2012). Willem de Rooij’s pavilion housed a sound recording – *Farafra* – of camels on the Libyan-Egyptian border, recalling the display of animals and humans alike in the colonial villages of international expositions. Johannesburg video artist and activist Tracey Rose’s television-shaped pavilion reopened the wounds of Apartheid with a live soap opera. Japanese playwright Toshiki Okada’s



Figure 0.20: Branca Prlić and Tamer Yiğit, 52.4697°N 13.396°E, for *The Great World’s Fair 2012 – The World Is Not Fair*, an event organized by raumlaborberlin and Hebbel am Ufer, June 2012, Tempelhof Park, Berlin. Courtesy of raumlaborberlin.



Figure 0.21: Tracey Rose, Pavilion for *The Great World’s Fair 2012 – The World Is Not Fair*, an event organised by raumlaborberlin and Hebbel am Ufer, June 2012, Tempelhof Park, Berlin. Courtesy of raumlaborberlin.



Figure 0.22: Erik Göngrich, *Pavilion of the World Fair* (background: Pavilion created by architectural collective Umschichten), for *The Great World's Fair 2012 – The World Is Not Fair*, an event organised by raumlaborberlin and Hebbel am Ufer, June 2012, Tempelhof Park, Berlin. Courtesy of raumlaborberlin.

pavilion, *Unable to See*, memorialised the victims of the 2011 Tōhoku disaster. Film directors Branca Prlić and Tamer Yiğit's conceived a pavilion for refugees, called *52.4697°N 13.396°E*. Beirut artist Rabih Mroué's tunnel-like pavilion *Double Shooting* alluded to the conflict in Syria. Erik Göngrich's *Pavilion of World's Fairs* lampooned the exposition institution with comical flags, slogans and murals.

Integrated in their park-like setting by red-and-white-striped awnings and partitions, the festive tent-like structures of *The World Is Not Fair* sheltered very different world views than those expressed in pavilions ornamenting the Arcadias and Utopias of the modern

era. If these often communicated the grand ideas and ideals of Enlightenment, the pavilions of Tempelhofer Park seem more like postmodern billboards for raumlaborberlin's motto, 'Bye bye Utopia!' On an increasingly militarised planet, where the difference between natural, diplomatic and industrial disasters is increasingly blurry, such counter-discursive projects represent a 'place between' art and architecture. They are host to the more meaningful encounters between the 'pleasure and polemics' that pavilions have always facilitated. Here, the pavilion more clearly exposes itself for what it is – a little tent under which big worlds and embattled perceptions of the world come into view.

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