

Pavilions

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Edited by Joel Robinson

This second issue of the [Open Arts Journal](#) draws together a number of exploratory texts – some academic, some more creative in style – on the understudied subject of pavilions.

Responding to the question ‘What is a pavilion?’, and with an extended introductory essay by Joel Robinson ([‘Big worlds under little tents’](#)), this issue proposes that the pavilion (as an ornamental garden structure, an exposition venue, or something more conceptual like a curated project or book) should no longer be neglected as a minor or inconsequential form of architecture. Although its origins may be in the modest tents of travellers, the pavilion as a structure has nonetheless been mobilized in strategies of world-making and unmaking, and this issue explores these creative manoeuvres.

The first section, *‘Historical themes and contexts,’* is a collection of mostly essay-length texts by [Ihor Junyk](#), [Jane Lomholt](#), [Joel Robinson](#), [Jaimee K. Comstock-Skipp](#) and [Karolina Szynalska](#), taking forward a genealogy of pavilions. A series of case studies introduces pavilions in their many forms during the modern period – picturesque garden ornaments, exotic structures that speak of remote times and places, and national exposition buildings at the world’s fairs and other exhibitions. Here, the pavilion is discussed as a monumental object as well as a receptacle for other objects, and a type of architecture that is rarely far away from imperialist or nationalist agendas. Long after it has served its original purpose, it may incite reflection on the decay and ‘afterlife’ of such structures.

In *‘The architecture of display,’* the pavilion is considered as a structure – architectural or otherwise – for framing the world, or putting a piece of the world on display. Texts by [Brian Hatton](#), [Flavia Marcello](#), [Jennifer Way](#), [Beccy Kennedy](#), [Wendy Asquith](#), [Jaspar Joseph-Lester](#) and [Michael Corris](#) address the way in which pavilions mediate observation and knowledge of the world. This section probes the intriguing dynamic that pavilions set up between the container and the contained, and how they might even be said to deconstruct that dynamic while becoming works of art in their own right (e.g., sculptural objects like Mies van der Rohe’s Barcelona pavilion).

The final section, *‘Contemporary projects,’* carries short statements, reviews and photo-essays by [Sophie Kazan](#), [Yam Lau](#), [Sarah Bonnemaïson](#), [Harriet Harriss](#), and a longer text by [Chris Tucker](#). They consider a range of sites from privately-funded exposition buildings and the high-budget ‘star’ architecture of the Serpentine Gallery commissions, to more modest works that intervene in public space. These projects raise questions about community outreach, participatory citizenship and direct democracy, and show up the ineffectiveness or emptiness of some of today’s official public art commissions. The issue concludes with a perceptive afterword by [Michaela Giebelhausen](#): a Surrealist-inspired piece that takes a ramble through Paris – the city of universal expositions – and pauses on what remains of its exhibition grounds and public parks.