

Temporary Architecture*

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ABSTRACT

In architecture, permanence is mainly associated with the endurance of material and durability of construction. Temporary architecture, on the contrary, has a predetermined and brief life span. Pavilion design provides a pragmatic infrastructure in order to discover the concept of the ‘temporality’ in architecture. Serpentine Gallery's Pavilions in Hyde Park, London will be inquired in this context. This paper will be investigating the definition and the boundaries of the term 'temporary' in architecture.

KEYWORDS: Temporality, Permanence, Pavilion Design, Display.

1 TEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

Researches into architectural history tend to define architecture in terms of its stability related with its location and durability. Here it is significant that, the architecture of the pavilion is not grounded on the land, so has no fixed location; and its temporary nature suggests also a context-free existence. The character of the pavilion is to be erected and dismantled over and over again. In French, the words pavilion and butterfly (pavillon and papillon) come from the same Latin root: papilio (Puente,2000) ¹, both describing something that moves from perch to perch, as the life of the pavilion is as brief as that of a butterfly, and the connection between the pavilion and the ground is weak, avoiding anchorage to the earth. Here, temporality in architecture will be analyzed by exploring the embodiment of the missions, components and complexities of permanent architectural inputs in the relatively small transitory structures covered here, being pavilion designs. Ayşen Savaş underlines the fact that temporary structures, while satisfying the requirements of the architectural domain, also accommodate architectural programs or „functional requirements“. While satisfying the functional requirements of architectural programs also accommodate a power to generate a discursive environment.

Investigating the permanent and temporary qualities of architecture, Bernard Tschumi states that architecture is not meant to be permanent; it cannot be related to a limited time. Tschumi re-examines the Vitruvian trilogy of “*venustas, firmitas and utilitas*”, describes “*firmitas*” as a “structural ability” and discovers that three qualities have remained obsessively in thoughts for centuries. He asks if these architectural constants did not exist, how would architecture be? Moreover, he underlines the fact that the permanence of architecture can be a bad mental habit and is a result of intellectual laziness that has been observed throughout the history (Tschumi 1996) . Jean Nouvel, on the other hand, like Peter Zumthor, asserts that architecture is related to light constructions that are ‘not heavy,’ ‘changeable,’ ‘not

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permanent,' 'dematerialized,' and 'not matter bounded'(Leatherbarrow, 2009). There are several forms of designing temporary architecture such as exposition, exhibition and pavilion. In recent years, the pavilion design has been witnessed a rising concern. The pavilion proposals disregard social concerns, in that they rather recognize the specification of architectural practice and its history. Contemporary technologies embrace a variety of techniques that in the end, offer diversity for architectural interpretation. If this fact and the possibilities of the current situation were ignored, architecture would be forced to retreat from the realities of the current condition.

The last few decades have witnessed an ever-widening range of temporary architectural practices such as pavilions, expositions and exhibition spaces that invite the public to touch, enter, experience and think about architecture, whether they are located in a park, on a street, in a gallery or next to an existing building. These structures allow the public to comment on architecture and interact with the discipline. Pavilions, by their very nature, are nomadic, so there is no trace left behind when they are gone. Pavilion designs reflect some common characteristics such as flexible use, a standardization of each architectural element, easy transportation, quick/easy construction and dismantling. Their ephemeral nature indicates that they can be used for different functions for short periods. They can be used as the extensions of some larger buildings to serve to minimalist functions.

This study reintroduces the term "temporary" as a creative tool in the production of architecture, with an overview of contemporary practices in pavilion design realized through a reinterpretation of 'temporality' as a means of producing exhibition architecture and as a medium of application. To this end, the initiator of this study is the example of the Serpentine Gallery Pavilions that provides an ideal platform for an examination of the concept of temporality, launching a discussion on the dialectic relationship between temporary architecture and its different representations. The Serpentine Gallery Pavilions have played a leading role in this study, and have given form to the theoretical framework, by serving as a bibliographical index in the direction of this study.

The Serpentine Gallery is located at the west of the Long Water in Kensington Gardens, Hyde Park, in Central London. It was built in 1934 and had been used as a tea pavilion until 1970, after which the gallery was established by the Arts Council of Great Britain, and since that time it has been used as a showplace for the exhibition of contemporary art.

Julia Peyton Jones, a lecturer in fine art at Edinburgh College of Art, was appointed as director in 1991, and in 1997, the owner of The Serpentine Gallery, the Princess of Wales, organized a gala dinner to celebrate its renovation. The commission invited Zaha Hadid to build a structure that reflected the exhibition program, believing she would design for the future of architecture and be able to mirror what the Serpentine stood for. Since then, the commission of the gallery has included acclaimed architects for the organization of the series of annual pavilions.

In architecture, pavilions can be accepted as the convenient medium for exploring new architectural ideas, methods and materials, without the limitations of established functions and their economics. These structures differ from conventional architectural practices in several ways; and as such, they are temporary since their period of existence is planned from the very beginning. Allan Wexler, an architect and artist, touches upon the experimental possibilities of temporary structures and states that they can be constructed quite quickly, and can be built by the architects themselves. Additionally, they are usually inexpensive and relatively smaller than permanent structures of a similar kind. In short, they are suitable for exploring architecture in a reduced fashion (Bonnemaison and Esenbach 2009). He deals with the construction methods, economical requirements and the scales of these structures and states that these structures are a way of exploring the "new" in architectural practice and discourse.

The architects of the temporary structures experience new ways of architecture, all the while questioning what the future of architecture might be and how their experimentation can be represented. This small-scale and time-limited practice can be the key to the future of architectural practice. According to Toyo Ito, architect of the 2002 pavilion, designed the Serpentine Pavilion in terms of applying the algorithm formulation into the generator process of his architecture not only for this building, but also for his future architectural practices. The branching design of the Serpentine Gallery Pavilion was a significant stepping-stone, to Tod's Omotesando building (in Japan) in 2004 and the Sumika Pavilion (in

Japan) in 2007. While designing these three buildings, Ito followed the same methodology with three different materials. These examples offer proof that temporary architectural practices can serve to experience new methods and inspire the architect to design future works based on the same methods.



Figure 1: Serpentine Gallery Pavilion, 2002.
Source: [serpentinegallery](http://serpentinegallery.com)



Figure 2: TOD'S Omotesando Building, 2004.
Source: [toyo-ito archieve](http://toyo-ito.archieve.com)



Figure 3: Sumika Pavilion, 2007.
Source: [DEZEEN](http://dezeen.com)

The definition of the term temporality in architecture is related mainly to the lifespan of the structure, which is quite short in the case of pavilions. On this subject, Moisés Puente claims that the temporary structures have died young, and that their temporary existence does not permit the passage of years². Although there is an inherent downside to the short lifespan of temporary architecture, there are compelling advantages that transcend their period of existence, their impact can be long lasting, they create a memory of architectural practice, project the power of focus, perception, construction, and their inevitable destruction forms a part of their relevance. Moreover, the power of the experience of a pavilion lends importance to its evaluation and effect, as well as its meanings, thereby diminishing the relevance of its temporary nature.

Hans Ulbrich Obrist, the director of international projects of the Serpentine Gallery, mentions that many essential inventions of architecture come from temporary pavilions or exhibitions. He supports his thoughts with examples such as Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion (1929), Alvar Aalto's Finnish Pavilion for the World Exhibition in Paris (1937), Le Corbusier and Iannis Xenakis' Philips Pavilion at the World Fair in Brussels (1958), and Buckminster Fuller's Geodesic Dome for the American National Exhibition in Moscow (1959) that can be considered as part of the unwritten history of 20th century architecture (Jodido, 2011). However, they are not permanent structures; they have to be somehow seen

² Puente. op. cit., pp. 8.

as part of the cannon. Although, the structures are not meant to stand eternally, experiments can also happen. The unusual thing with the Serpentine Pavilions is that even though these structures are evaluated in the case of temporary architecture, the series of the pavilion design has been continued.

Investigating the series of these temporary structures, they have a crucial role to understand the boundaries, relationships and definitions of temporary architecture. Each architect redefines and designs his/her own temporary architectural structures while dealing with the same program and context. Architect can ignore or change the necessities of program and rewrite his/her architectural program with the concept of temporality in terms of these architectural practices. The perception of the ephemeral structures can be varied such as enclosed/open space or architectural building/installation. The material, method and concept of the temporality can be changed based on the design of pavilions, but the architectural program is the same that design a summer pavilion for three months limited time. The production of architectural space is realized in terms of the transitory and can be varied based on the differences between the perceptions, the definition of temporary architecture, and the concept of temporality in architecture, and the material and method of the architect. These structures are claimed to be crucial for interpreting new and different consciousness of architectural practices.

Architectural practice and discourse are enriched by experimenting the new materials and new methods, and this thesis suggests that pavilion design can be considered as a new laboratory for experimentation in architecture. This suggested critical position of pavilion design can be considered as the conceptual base from which experimentation in architecture can be launched, in terms of both materials and methods. Also open to discussion is the role of the architect in changing the more familiar thinking of architecture, which is largely dependent on the architect's perception and how he/she applies it to the design process. An architect's choices of materials and methods can be a key to the creation of opportunities and the setting of limits in architecture.

There is no precious definition of what a pavilion is exactly, or how the limitation and the boundary of temporality are represented. As such architects redefine and set up their own rules while designing such temporary structures. The definition of the term "pavilion" changes with respect to the architect's perception, since the term cannot be defined with any certainly. The architect can redefine temporality through the pavilion based on a re-exploration of space with new materials in an innovative way, and can also experience changing tendencies in architecture through these temporary structures. The goal of Rem Koolhaas was not to reinvent the tradition of the pavilion, but to focus particularly on the space of the pavilion in 2006. His approach was to redefine the space within a temporary situation, stating that the pavilion can only be possible due to the events and the activities, and that the space is also temporary itself, being changeable according to the conditions.

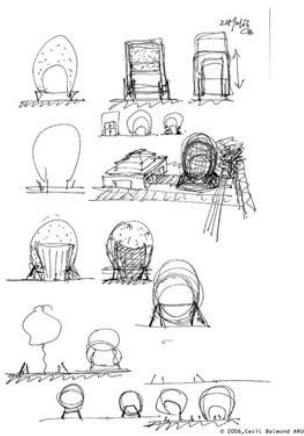


Figure 4: Sketch of the Pavilion of Rem Koolhaas.
Source: [serpentinegallery](http://serpentinegallery.com)



Figure 5: Serpentine Pavilion, 2006.
Source: [OMA](http://oma.com)

With respect to the one of the objectives of the pavilion design as a production of temporary architecture, which have a potential to create a long-lasting impact and memory on architectural discourse, although they lack the durability for the passage of years. Pavilions have been positioned for analyzing the relationships, boundaries and definitions of temporary architecture, and have made a noticeable impact, witnessing a rise in interest in recent years. Pavilion design differs from more conventional architectural practices, since it lacks the limitations of established functions and economics. It is usually inexpensive, small-scaled and easily demountable, and moreover, its period of existence is determined at the very beginning of the generation process. Even though it is designed for only one specific task, it has several advantages, such as its ability to have a long-lasting impact on contemporary architecture and its discourse, its creation of a “new” memory in architectural practice, and its generation of a power of perception.

While referring to the future architecture, the representation of both temporality and permanence has been set out in terms of material, methods and concepts of the architectural product. The designed ability of a permanent architectural product to endure eternally has been related to the material resistance and the durability of the construction against the effects of time and nature. The materials and construction methods used in the Serpentine Gallery Pavilions has been investigated to explore permanence and temporality nature, since the details of the pavilions reveal their potential for reuse and durability throughout time. Although the pavilions were constructed to carry out only one short-term task, and were designed as temporary structures, a number of them have been reconstructed in different locations and times, and this reconstruction of the pavilions has been questioned to put forth their temporality.

The temporary architectural practices have power to generate a discursive environment, while defining a space where they are located. These temporary structures may be the reference for the permanent architectural practices that can be constructed more extensively in the future. They can be a key to establishing an effective relationship with the environment and space, and to have an effective suggestion about the future architecture that would not be possible with more complex contemporary buildings. Temporary architectural practices have influenced contemporary architecture and the architect’s perception, making open-minded statements on architecture that can be taken up by architects in future projects. This interaction constitutes a practical and conceptual background of the architectural domain.

In this study, pavilions has been argued to stimulate lasting debates in architectural discourse, related not only temporality itself, but also in the redefinition of pavilion by architects. Cecil Balmond states that pavilions have developed around architectural debates on various structural typologies and materials; however, it is not only the typology and materials that are worthy of note, as the definition of the pavilion is also worth mentioning³. All effort is spent to create a structure that may be dismantled quickly, leaving nothing behind, and so the exercise retains freshness and seems to make a contribution of a very different kind. Pavilions have the potential to interpret „other“ types of architecture, which is related to temporality and raises consciousness in architectural practices.

These temporary structures have provoked many debates in the domains of architectural research, discourse and practice such as those dealing with pavilion architecture, temporary architecture, museology, curatorial studies and exhibition design; whether the pavilion was built or not. They have potential to set up new techniques in the production of architecture, pioneering of new architectural generation processes, and directing the exploration and experiencing of new concepts, method and materials. The interpretations, debates and investigations of pavilions transcended its temporary nature, and these structures raise awareness, criticism and reflection, which are seen as the primary function in temporary architectural practices.

To conclude; pavilions, expositions and exhibition spaces invite not only the architect, but also the public to comment on and think about architecture. Thus, both the architect and observer of the pavilion

³ Jodido. op. cit., pp. VII.06.

are driven to open debate on these structures, which plays a role in the research, practice and opening of various possibilities in architectural space design. In this regard, pavilions can be reinterpreted as an agent to redefine and reformation of the borders of architectural discipline. The aim of the thesis is to put emphasis on the importance of the pavilion as a temporary architectural production and to reveal the dialogue it inspires between architecture, architectural discourse, the architect and the observer as profession for the redefinition and interpretation of the pavilion design. Drawing upon the example of the Serpentine Gallery Pavilions, emphasis has been on the pavilion as a public space of experimentation in architecture. The intention of this study has been to motivate deeper and more critically concerned architectural studies in the design of temporary architecture, with the purpose of influencing architecture in the future. Temporary architecture has a profound on architectural discourse and practice, and allows new opportunities in the field of architecture to be remarked upon and analyzed. In short, temporary structures offer the architect with a broad variety of freedoms to experience the “new” in architecture.

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