



‘NOT MONTHS BUT MOMENTS’: EPHEMERALITY, MONUMENTALITY AND THE PAVILION IN RUINS

Ihor Junyk

This essay examines a fundamental tension between ephemerality and monumentality in the history of pavilion architecture. Descended from the ancient tent, the pavilion was taken up by European landscape architecture in the eighteenth century and integrated into an aesthetic of the picturesque. These ephemeral structures became both settings and instruments of a set of fleeting experiences that can be grouped under the category of reverie. However, during the course of the nineteenth century, the pavilion underwent a dramatic change, gradually becoming the monumental representative for nations participating at the various expositions and World’s Fairs of that century and the next. Unable to actualise the permanence they were meant to embody, pavilions instead called forth aggressive fantasies of ruin and death. Wary of the deathly aesthetics of monumentality and sublimity, architects working in recent decades have returned the pavilion to its original ephemerality. Experimenting with new materials and digital technologies they have created contemporary follies as new spaces for reverie.

Keywords: pavilion, monumentality, ephemeral, ruin, death, reverie, Paris Exposition 1939.

Ihor Junyk, Trent University in Peterborough

Ihor Junyk is an Associate Professor of Cultural Studies at Trent University in Peterborough (Ontario, Canada) where he teaches and researches literature, visual culture, and media. His articles have appeared in leading humanities journals such as *Grey Room*, *Comparative Literature*, and *Early Popular Visual Culture*. He is the author of *Foreign Modernism: Cosmopolitanism, Identity, and Style in Paris*, (University of Toronto Press, 2013).

‘Not Months but Moments’: Ephemerality, Monumentality, and the Pavilion in Ruins

(Ihor Junyk, Trent University in Peterborough)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5456/issn.2050-3679/2013w02ij>

To view the images used in this article in a larger and more detailed format, follow this link:

<http://openartsjournal.org/issue-2/issue-2-galleries/article-1>

‘NOT MONTHS BUT MOMENTS’: EPHEMERALITY, MONUMENTALITY AND THE PAVILION IN RUINS

Ihor Junyk

Abstract

This essay examines a fundamental tension between ephemerality and monumentality in the history of pavilion architecture. Descended from the ancient tent, the pavilion was taken up by European landscape architecture in the eighteenth century and integrated into an aesthetic of the picturesque. These ephemeral structures became both settings and instruments of a set of fleeting experiences that can be grouped under the category of reverie. However, during the course of the nineteenth century, the pavilion underwent a dramatic change, gradually becoming the monumental representative for nations participating at the various expositions and World's Fairs of that century and the next. Unable to actualise the permanence they were meant to embody, pavilions instead called forth aggressive fantasies of ruin and death. Wary of the deathly aesthetics of monumentality and sublimity, architects working in recent decades have returned the pavilion to its original ephemerality. Experimenting with new materials and digital technologies they have created contemporary follies as new spaces for reverie.

📌 The butterfly counts not months but moments, and has time enough. 📌

Rabindranath Tagore

Despite its status as a minor architectural form (or perhaps because of this very fact), the pavilion embodies in a heightened way one of the central dilemmas of architectural modernity, and perhaps aesthetic modernity more generally – namely, the conflict between ephemerality and monumentality. In a time of ubiquitous impermanence and fleeting change how is it possible to stop time and make deep impressions, and indeed should one even try? Throughout most of its history the pavilion has been a self-consciously provisional structure. Descended from the ancient tent, it was taken up by European landscape architecture in the eighteenth century where it took various guises, including the kiosk and the pagoda, structures that can all be grouped under the general category of the folly. Even when these humble

structures were given more elegance and permanence by the aestheticizing tastes of the aristocracy, one might argue that the fundamentally ephemeral character of these buildings remained one of their central features. Integrated into an aesthetics of the picturesque, they were both the setting and instrument of a set of fleeting experiences – surprise, pleasure, desire – that I will call reverie. During the course of the nineteenth century, however, the pavilion underwent a dramatic change. From the humble folly it gradually became the avatar of the nation at the various expositions and world's fairs of that century and the next. But in doing so, the pavilion embodied a fundamental contradiction. As part of a finite exposition, by its very nature it was ephemeral; as a building that would sooner or later disappear from the topography of the city in which it was built, to be re-sited subsequently either in its home country or in the archives of cultural memory.

But ideology and nationalism demanded ever more monumental pavilions – buildings that would testify to the power and permanence of the nation and induce in the spectator feelings of awe. Unable to reconcile permanence and transience, pavilions instead called forth aggressive fantasies of ruin and death, a tendency that finds its aesthetic formulation in Albert Speer's 'theory of ruin value' and its embodiment in the Deutsches Haus, the German pavilion designed by Speer for the Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques de la Vie Moderne in Paris, 1937. Speer's work is both the apotheosis and crisis of a particular necrophilic conception of the pavilion. Wary of the deathly aesthetics of monumentality and sublimity, contemporary architects have returned the pavilion to its original ephemerality. Experimenting with new materials and digital technologies they have created contemporary follies as new spaces for reverie.¹

¹ This is not to say that every pavilion prior to the *fin de siècle* was ephemeral, nor that every pavilion of the twentieth century was monumental. History is far messier than that and there are counterexamples to any such generalisation. Among them are the examples of an aesthetic and ideological tendency in Le Corbusier's iconic Esprit Nouveau pavilion for the 1937 Exposition Internationale, which presented a modernised vision of ephemerality, as well as the pavilions of Italy, Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, the French Trocadéro, and many other structures besides which opted for a monumental classicism. While the 1937 exposition comprised works of ephemerality, then, the aesthetics of monumentality clearly dominated. If the following account schematises somewhat it is not in order to deny such cultural complexity but to present these dominant trends more clearly and starkly.

From ephemerality to monumentality

Etymologically, the word 'pavilion' can be traced back to the Old French term 'pavellun' which is itself derived from the Latin 'papilio' meaning 'tent' or literally 'butterfly,' presumably because of the way that tent flaps moving in the wind were reminiscent of the beating wings of a butterfly. (Bergdoll, 2009, p.13). The pavilion entered the vernacular of eighteenth-century landscape architecture and drew very much on the ephemerality of these origins. Inspired by the buildings of Asia and the Middle East, architects created compact, standalone structures to be used in the complex dramaturgy of picturesque garden design. These were typically playful and even experimental structures unconstrained by the classical canon and the hierarchy of building types. While the tent-like 'Turkish kiosk' was the most obvious descendent of the 'papilio,' countless buildings in a variety of 'exotic' styles emphasised the origin of the pavilion as a makeshift, temporary structure.

This constitutive ephemerality manifested itself not only in the external form of the pavilion but also in the uses to which these buildings were put. The popularity of the pavilion was in part inspired by a turn to the picturesque in European aesthetics

in the eighteenth century. In 1719 both Alexander Pope and the architect John Vanbrugh used the term 'picturesque' to argue for the creation of landscapes suffused with pictorial instead of architectural qualities (Bergdoll, 2000, p.75). Anchored in a sensationalist epistemology, the advocates of the picturesque rejected the geometric formalism of the gardens of Versailles with their appeal to the intellect, and valorised instead simple and natural gardens as the setting most likely to facilitate sensation and experience. Over the course of the eighteenth century architects developed an elaborate set of representational techniques for use in landscape design. Asymmetric composition, winding paths, water and lighting effects were just some of the tools designers could mobilise to elicit emotion and inspire thought. Pavilions also played a crucial role in this regard. The combination of landscape and built structures allowed designers to lead garden visitors to reflect on the relationship between nature and culture. Similarly, the stylistic heterogeneity of pavilion buildings served as a springboard for meditations on cultural relativism, history, or the fate of civilisations. Reciprocal views allowed a structure to appear from several different positions in the park and be juxtaposed with new objects and settings, potentially serving as



Figure 1.1: The Sultan's Copper Tents, Drottningholm Palace, Sweden, 1787. Photograph: Holger Elgaard.

a prop for the contemplation of perspective, meaning and knowledge. But the experience of pavilions was certainly not exclusively serious or contemplative. The term 'folly' emerged in the eighteenth century to refer to a diverse class of garden structures defined by their whimsy, playfulness, and lack of utility. As Anthony Vidler has noted, 'what was not permitted in "serious" building was, by definition, permitted in the folly. A mere plaything, the folly could exhibit the dimensions of play' (Vidler, 1983, p.11). 'Rooms for dreaming' (Bussmann, 2009, p.39), follies were places where one could put aside the serious business of the world and give oneself over to fantasy, amusement, and pleasure.

Although the uses of the pavilion were manifold, the experiences it solicited were overwhelmingly defined by their transitoriness and ephemerality. This was not a place for undivided attention or the hard work of reason. Instead it called forth mobile states of thought and feeling – those that flowed like water or flitted like butterflies – in order to house a diverse company of experiences, for whom the term reverie can perhaps serve as a kind of master figure, as in the thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Indeed, writing during the heyday of the picturesque garden and the folly, Rousseau turned to reverie as an alternative to Enlightenment rationality with its instrumental purposiveness and optical clarity. In his *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* Rousseau describes the pleasures and possibilities offered by this mode of being:

☛ I would slip away and get in a boat all alone, which I would row out to the middle of the lake when it was calm, and there, stretching out full-length in the boat, my eyes looking up to the sky, I would let myself float and drift slowly wherever the water took me, sometimes for several hours at a time, plunged in a thousand vague but delightful reveries, which, although they did not have any clear or constant subject, I always found a hundred times preferable to all the sweetest things I had enjoyed in what are known as the pleasures of life. ☛

(Rousseau, [1782] 2011, pp.52–53)

With his thoughts mimicking the drift of his body, Rousseau discovers the *jouissance* of the fleeting, the contingent, and the non-purposive. This section in many ways echoes the famous description of the picturesque Elysée garden in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*: 'The more I wandered through this pleasant refuge,' notes one of the characters, 'the more I felt increasing the delightful sensation which I had experienced upon entering ... I was more eager to see the objects than to examine the impression they made on me, and I preferred to

give myself up to that charming contemplation without taking the trouble to reflect about it' (Rousseau, [1761] 1968, p.307). Later, meditating on his experiences in the garden, Rousseau notes that 'I had promised myself a pleasant reverie. I had dreamed there more agreeably than I had expected. I spent in the Elysium two hours to which I prefer no other time in my life' (p.315). Here the garden plays a parallel role to that of the lake in the fifth walk of the *Reveries*. It provides the site and spark for a variety of fluid states of consciousness which are indistinct and so deeply pleasurable and satisfying. Although he does not mention the pavilion, it is plain why this structure could enhance and intensify the kinds of experiences that Rousseau describes. It may be said, then, that the eighteenth century pavilion was the home of reverie.

But this place of intimate and private experiences develops over the course of the nineteenth century into a much more public structure. Democratic revolutions, the spread of capitalism, and the rise of mass culture all engendered novel forms of public spectacle that required new types of buildings and the pavilion evolved to accommodate them. Initially, agricultural and industrial expositions were held in provisional structures that hearkened back to the 'papilio.' When the Agricultural Fair comes to Yonville in Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, the only structure erected is a tent: 'It was here at last, the day of the famous Agricultural Fair! On the morning of the solemn occasion, all the townspeople were at their doors talking about the preparations; the pediment of the town hall had been festooned with ivy; a tent for the banquet had been set up in a field; and in the middle of the Square, in front of the church, a sort of ancient cannon was to signal the arrival of the Prefect and the naming of the prizewinning farmers' (Flaubert, [1856] 2010, p.115). Similarly, the industrial expositions of the early 1800s were originally housed in tents or in tent-like structures made of more durable materials.

However, as these expositions developed over the course of the nineteenth century, morphing eventually into world fairs, they were tasked with increasingly elaborate symbolic work. The fairs were not merely an occasion to gather and display consumer goods, industrial products, or works of art; they became both emblem and instrument of more grandiose aims. The 1851 Great Exhibition in London was meant to establish Britain's industrial pre-eminence, while the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition became an opportunity to demonstrate Chicago's status as a world class-city, rivaling Paris and New York. The 1937 Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques de la Vie Moderne in Paris was set out to facilitate world

peace and economic revitalisation. Given these aims, it was inadequate for the exposition pavilions simply to provide cover for their contributors. They needed to carry an independent and more powerful semiotic charge.

In order to fulfill these symbolic mandates architects turned again and again to the register of the monumental. This is an aesthetic modality of great antiquity, stretching back to the pyramids of the Egyptians and the temples and tombs of the Greeks and Romans. Etymologically, the word monument comes from *monumentum* in Latin, which derives from *monere*, meaning 'to remind,' but also 'to warn,' for posterity. 'Monuments are reminders, in enduring material, of the achievement of a collective (whether family, city or nation),' notes James Porter. 'They are collective expressions with ideological force' (2011, p.685). Although monuments can take radically different forms, Porter argues that 'what all monuments in any form share is an expression of permanence in the face of loss' (p.685). In order to achieve this monumental structures have typically availed themselves of the aesthetic resources of the sublime. According to Porter, 'though not always huge in size, monuments invariably make a huge and lasting impression on the beholder' (p.687).

In spite of the manifold differences between structures such as the Crystal Palace, the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building, and the Deutsches Haus, they all aspired to monumentality as a means to make ideological points and mobilised the rhetoric of the sublime. Whether it was the overwhelming luminosity of Paxton's building, the sheer size of Post's, or the



Figure 1.2: George B. Post, Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893.

power of Speer's, all three structures sought to inspire awe in beholders and thereby convince them of the permanence and rightness of the values these buildings embodied.

But there is an element of bad faith here. For despite the persuasiveness of the rhetoric of monumentality and sublimity, it is clear that the monument is not eternal. The life of monumental stone is longer than the life of man, but it too is subject to time and decay; it is ultimately ephemeral. This is a state of affairs long recognised and explored by various poets. In discussing his poetic achievement in Ode 3.30, Horace notes that 'I have finished a monument more lasting than bronze, more lofty than the regal structure of the pyramids, one which neither corroding rain nor the ungovernable North Wind can ever destroy, nor the countless series of the years, nor the flight of time' (Horace, [23 BCE] 2004). Here the author presents a *paragone*, a competition of the arts. By making a claim for the superiority of poetry, he highlights the fragility of architecture, whose materiality is vulnerable to the ravages of time and the elements.

That motif of collapse and ruin recurs in Latin poetry. In the fourth century CE, Ausonius meditated on the melancholy spectacle of faded inscriptions on monumental structures:

❏ 'Lucius' is one letter, but it is separated by twin points: in this way a single sign indicates the <entire> praenomen. After an 'M' is inscribed, at least I think so – it is not all visible. The top has been damaged by the stone breaking and has fallen off (*dissiluit saxi fragmine laesus apex*). [. . .] The letters [. . .] have perished in a confusion of signs (*omnia confusis interiere notis*). Are we surprised that men die? Monuments gape apart (*monumenta fatisunt*), death comes even to stones and names. ❏

(Cited in Porter, 2011, p.691)

In this account a stone has collapsed, and with it the memory of those it was meant to preserve. Even in the nineteenth century, a period of intense appetites for monumental building, Shelley's *Ozymandias* is a warning against the hubris of those who would attempt to step outside time and inscribe their names for eternity.

This recognition, however, has generally been a melancholy one, for the desire to endure is a deeply rooted one, in Western culture at least. At the very beginnings of the Western tradition Aristotle identified it as a fundamental biological drive:

❏ For the most natural function of living things... is to produce another living thing like itself...in

order that they may partake of the eternal and the divine as far as they can; for all living things “desire” [the eternal and the divine], and it is for the sake of this that those who act according to nature do so. ¶

(Aristotle, [350 BCE] 1981, p.415b)

Faced with the onslaught of time and the transitoriness of life, humans both procreate and create, seeking to extend themselves both biologically and culturally. While this is a concern going back to antiquity, one might argue that it takes on a particular pathos in the modern day. Looking at the discourse of ruination in early twentieth century Germany, Mark Featherstone argues that this ‘will to endurance functions as a symptom of a deeper pathology that one might call the obsession with disappearance’. (Featherstone, 2005, p.302) In opposition to the modern condition, ‘whereby the self experiences the shock of transience and the horror of the endless slippage of form,’ certain producers of culture ‘sought to generate an image of profound wholeness that could remain resistant to the chaos of modernity.’ This is a psycho-pathology that functions as a ‘neurotic response to the natural history of transience’ and ‘produces a symptomology of permanence, totality, and eternity’ (pp.302–303) Featherstone calls the psychotic sublime.²

Such a tension between the desire to endure and the recognition that even the most monumental extensions are fleeting and impermanent has brought some remarkable cultural consequences. Andreas Huyssen has identified a particular reaction in Richard Wagner that, I will argue, has much wider cultural currency. Discussing the opposition between ephemerality and monumentality in Wagner’s works, Huyssen notes that ‘the anxiety produced by this tension results in a paranoid aggressive streak, which couples the insight into the transitoriness of art with images of ruin, death, and destruction. The pressures of the transitory affect the monumental itself: the only monument that counts is the one already imagined as ruin’ (Huyssen, 1996, p.189). Caught between the desire for the monumental and eternal and a knowledge of the impossibility of this desire, Wagner responds by elaborating violent and

apocalyptic fantasies. While the tendency might be to see this reaction as merely the idiosyncratic expression of an aberrant psyche, it is the kind of reading that covers over the widespread presence of this discourse of ruination within debates about monumental building. Repeatedly over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, exposition pavilions meant to invoke stability and permanence instead called up violent fantasies of destruction, ruination and death.

The discourse around the closing of the Columbian Exposition provides a particularly striking example of this tendency. When Chicago won the right to stage the fair, the organisers were reputed to have aimed for the grandest spectacle the world had ever seen. There was a prevailing sense, both in the United States and abroad, that while the city was an important commercial centre, it was too young and provincial to stage a significant cultural event. The designers of the fair used the rhetoric of monumentality and sublimity in order to prove the naysayers wrong in the hope of demonstrating Chicago’s emergence as a world-class city. The participating architects imagined buildings on an unprecedented scale. For example, George B. Post’s Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building was the largest building ever constructed to that time, three times the size of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. When the fair opened the sublimity of the buildings indeed left spectators awestruck. According to Erik Larson, ‘no single element accounted for this phenomenon. Each building was huge to begin with, but the impression of mass was amplified by the fact that all the buildings were neoclassical in design, all had cornices set at the same height, all had been painted the same soft white, and all were so shockingly, beautifully unlike anything the majority of visitors ever had seen in their own dusty hometowns’ (Larson, 2003, p.252). Enthusiastic about the fair’s grand central square, a contemporary visitor opined that ‘no other scene of man’s creation seemed to me so perfect as this Court of Honor ... the aesthetic sense of the beholder was as fully and unreservedly satisfied as in looking at a masterpiece of painting or sculpture, and at the same time was soothed and elevated by a sense of amplitude and grandeur such as no single work of art could produce’ (p.252).

Despite the monumental impression that these buildings made, they were nonetheless ephemeral structures. In order to speed up construction, architects decided to clad their buildings in staff – a mixture of plaster and jute that could be molded into columns and spread over wooden frames to give the illusion of stone. ‘There will not be a brick on the grounds’ (p.120), noted Daniel Burnham, the Director

² In his classic book on suburbia, *The Castles on the Ground* (1973), J.M. Richards makes a very similar point, albeit without Featherstone’s cultural pessimism. ‘In fact for all their distance apart,’ he writes, ‘geographically and spiritually, Moscow and Metroland have this in common, that architecture is to them not an art form to be accepted or rejected according to the rules of aesthetic taste. It is a symbol of what is real and tangible in an uncertain world, contributing to their environment the comforts of familiarity’ (p.63).

of Works for the fair. The end of the exposition and the need to take down these provisional structures unleashed a torrent of violent fantasies. Charles McKim, one of the fair architects, noted that: 'indeed it is the ambition of all concerned to have it all swept away in the same magical manner in which it appeared, and with the utmost despatch. For economy, as well as for obvious reasons, it has been proposed that the most glorious way would be to blow up the buildings with dynamite. Another scheme is to destroy them with fire. This last would be the easiest and grandest spectacle except for the danger of flying embers in the event of a change of wind from the lake' (p.321). A writer for *Cosmopolitan* was similarly apocalyptic. 'Better to have it vanish suddenly, in a blaze of glory,' he wrote, 'than fall into gradual disrepair and dilapidation. There is no more melancholy spectacle than a festal hall, the morning after the banquet, when the guests have departed and the lights are extinguished' (p.322). Even Carter Henry Harrison, the Mayor of Chicago imagined a kind of mid-western *Götterdämmerung*. 'It sickens me when I look at this great Exposition to think that it will be allowed to crumble to dust,' he noted during his speech at the closing ceremonies of the fair. He hoped the demolition would be quick and quoted Burnham: "'Let it go; it has to go, so let it go. Let us put the torch to it and burn it down.'" I believe with him. If we cannot preserve it for another year I would be in favor of putting a torch to it and burning it down and let it go up into the bright sky to eternal heaven' (p.328). If it cannot stand then let it fall; indeed, hasten the fall. Annihilate the monument, drive it into non-being.

It is difficult to know what to make of these kinds of reactions. Certainly they carry an element of infantile aggression, the blind fury of a child who would destroy an object (or indeed the entire world) for frustrating her desires. In his great treatise on aggression, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Sigmund Freud considered the economic function of this type of emotion. On the one hand he saw it as defiance and revenge – 'All right, then, go away! I don't need you. I'm sending you away myself' (Freud, 1975, p.15). But it also functioned as a coping mechanism, a strategy for accommodating oneself to loss. 'At the outset,' the child threatened with the loss of the love object 'was in a passive situation – he was overpowered by the experience; but by repeating it, unpleasurable though it was, as a game, he took on an active part' (p.15). It is a reading that resonates powerfully with N.J. Habraken's ideas about architecture, activity and violence, in which building is inextricably connected with action – an attempt to comprehend and take possession of our environment. Without the creative means to do this,

the work will be done destructively. 'It is well known,' writes Habraken, 'that if this urge for possession has no other means of expression it would rather become destructive than look on passively. A child will destroy a toy with which he can do nothing, and content himself with playing with the pieces' (Habraken, 1972, p.13).

Might then such upsurge of violent fantasies also be at the service of the 'instinct for mastery' identified by Freud and Habraken? Faced with the painful prospect of the inexorable decline of these beautiful objects, spectators responded by taking control and gaining mastery in the only way they could – by calling for that destruction themselves. Freud also shows us that aggression can have a paradoxically conservative function (Freud, 1975, p.43) and that lurking behind the calls to annihilation is the surprising urge to preserve. The prospect of the sublime monument's gradual deterioration is so painful that it sparks a desire to destroy it, enabling it to live on in memory, pristine and resplendent.³

What stands behind and enables both the destructive and conservative dimensions of these apocalyptic fantasies is what may be called the logic of monumentality. Ephemerality allows for transformation, even metamorphosis; it is a deeply graduated or differentiated state, one that acknowledges change and difference over time. The ephemeral object can take many different forms, can be many different things. Monumentality, on the other hand, is a binary state, allowing for only two modalities: resplendency or collapse, wholeness or ruin. The monumental object either is or is not.

While the discourse of monumentality and ruination reached a kind of fever pitch during the Chicago World's Fair, its apotheosis was still to come. With Albert Speer that monumental ruination was codified into a formal aesthetic principle. His 'theory of ruin value' turned every monument into a ruin *avant la lettre* and his deathly *Deutsches Haus* transformed the pavilion into the very anti-type of the eighteenth century folly.

The Deutsches Haus

The *Deutsches Haus* was the German pavilion at the 1937 Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques de la Vie Moderne in Paris. The Exposition was an event with a complicated history (Junyk, 2006). Organised during the Great Depression of the 1930s, its original aim was to stimulate investment, industry and trade. However, with the increasing tension of international affairs (the Italian invasion of Ethiopia; Franco's assaults

3 My thanks to Kristin Casady for pointing this out to me.

on the Spanish Republic; German rearmament) the promotion of peace and international cooperation became a subsidiary goal. The more idealistic French organisers were dismayed to discover, however, that not all of the participants supported these altruistic aims. Many of them were planning to use the Exposition as a forum for propaganda, effectively turning the fair into a competition of national identities. This is a tendency that had been developing for some time. The early fairs had had a largely commercial function. They provided a forum for the display and comparison of consumer goods and industrial products that were classified by category and nation of origin and exhibited in large international halls. However, with the growth of nationalist movements in Europe, and the widespread attempt to 'invent' national traditions, the expositions saw the increased popularity of discrete national pavilions which began to displace the more fluid, cosmopolitan exhibition spaces. These new national pavilions drew on the pavilions of the picturesque garden tradition, but this time in their guise as follies. The 'Rue des nations,' first seen at the 1878 Exposition Universelle in Paris, assembled a collection of follies as a street façade. But from this Exposition onward,

the exotic styles of the individual buildings stood in, metonymically, for the nations they represented. By the time of the Exposition Internationale, that transformation was complete. The expositions had shifted from displays of commercial wares to the display and propaganda of separate nations as collective entities, so that the pavilions themselves became avatars of the nation.

One can see this in the discussions regarding the Deutsches Haus. According to the official catalogue, the pavilion was 'meant to be an ambassador of its country, bearing witness of its artistic endeavour, and reflecting the strength and personality of the entire nation' (Fiss, 1995, p.108). These sentiments were echoed by Werner Rittich, one of the best known Nazi architecture critics, who claimed that '[t]his monument ... must be the manifesto of the German way of life and cultural will ... a symbol of the pride, of the strength, and of the consciousness of self' (Bartetzko, 1987, p.134). The Deutsches Haus, then, would function as a material sign of Germany's cultural renaissance and propaganda for a re-forged German identity. It sought to embody and broadcast the health, might and permanence of the Third Reich to the entire world.



Figure 1.3: The Rue des Nations, Exposition Universelle, Paris, 1878.

In order to do this, Albert Speer adopted the language of monumentality. This is evident, first of all, in the building's sheer size. The largest structure at the Exposition, the Deutsches Haus literally looked down on the other pavilions. And as Speer makes clear in his memoir, this was not only an aesthetic decision but an ideological statement. According to Speer:

▣ The Soviet Russian and German pavilions were to be placed directly opposite one another on the fairgrounds; the French directors of the fair had deliberately arranged this confrontation. While looking over the site in Paris, I by chance stumbled into a room containing the secret sketch of the Soviet pavilion. A sculpted pair of figures thirty-three feet tall, on a high platform, were striding triumphantly toward the German pavilion. I therefore designed a cubic mass, also elevated on stout pillars, which seemed to be checking this onslaught, while from the cornice of my tower an eagle with a swastika in its claws looked down on the Russian sculptures. ▣

(Speer, 1970, p.81)



Figure 1.4: Albert Speer, Deutsches Haus (German Pavilion), Exposition Internationale, Paris, 1937.

In the competition of ideologies and national identities, the imposing monumentality of the Deutsches Haus signalled the triumph of National Socialism, and sought to inspire awe at its sublime might. 'My architecture represented an intimidating display of power', wrote Speer, 'my buildings were heavy and menacing, constructed, so to speak, with too much muscle on them' (cited in Scobie, 1990, p.40). Speer's muscle-bound warrior presented a frightening spectacle of martial vigour that made a profound impression on the spectators of the Exposition. Amédée Ozenfant reported overhearing groups of French youth impressed by the building: "Smashing! You can see those people have got a Chief!" Here is another lot: "Why can't we do the same? What are we waiting for? Heil Hitler!" (Ozenfant, 1937, p.242). Spectators of the Deutsches Haus were led to believe in the superiority of the regime that created it.

Indeed, the Third Reich sought not only to establish its sublime might but also its venerability, arguing for the continuity of the Greco-Roman past and Nazi contemporaneity. Sometimes this was talked about as the continuity of cultural values. 'Hitler believed that the culture of the Greeks had reached the peak of perfection in every field', Speer later reflected. 'Their view of life, he said, as expressed in their architecture, had been "fresh and healthy." One day a photograph of a beautiful woman swimmer stirred him to enthusiastic reflections: "What splendid bodies you can see today. It is only in our century that young people have once again approached Hellenistic ideals through sports. How the body was neglected in earlier centuries. In this respect our times differ from all previous cultural epochs since antiquity"' (1970, pp.96–97). As the embodiment of both physical and cultural health, modern Germany was the heir of classical antiquity, it was thought. But sometimes the connection between ancient Greece and contemporary Germany took stranger forms. According to one current of Nazi ideology, the Germans literally were Greeks, or more accurately, the ancient Greeks had been Germans. In his memoirs, Speer discusses Hitler's belief in a shared German and Greek identity: 'By the Greeks he meant the Dorians. Naturally his view was affected by the theory – fostered by the scientists of his period – that the Dorian tribe, which migrated into Greece from the north, had been of Germanic origin, and that therefore its culture had not belonged to the Mediterranean world' (Speer, 1970, p. 97). The Germans, then, were not merely the bearers of privileged classical values but the actual descendants of an idealised ancient race.

The rhetoric of Speer's architecture picked up and embodied this belief in the continuity of Greece

and Germany. It did this by deploying the language of classicism. This is evident in the building's allusions to the classical temple: its strong horizontals and verticals, its large-cut stones, fluted piers, ceremonial entrance steps, mosaics and muscular Roman eagle. Two groups of Hellenic statues by Josef Thorak were there to draw the spectator's mind back to the halcyon days of ancient Greece. This connection was further reinforced by the discourse surrounding the pavilion. Its guidebook, written by prominent Nazi art critics and officials, denied that German classicism was 'mere slavish copying' and insisted that the similarities sprang from a world-view shared with the ancients: 'The reason for the fundamental harmony of our buildings with those of the Ancient World is a similar attitude towards building as such' (Fiss, 1995, p.108). Far from being an upstart regime, the Deutsches Haus made a claim for the longevity, even the eternity, of the Third Reich's values.

Yet despite its pretention to embody permanence, health and might, the Deutsches Haus was inevitably unable to support these ideals. Architectural historian Dieter Bartetzko has written extensively on the architectural references of the German pavilion of 1937. For him the Deutsches Haus alludes to several different funerary monuments, with the 'direct model of the pavilion' being the Munich Ehrentempel (Temple of Honour), a key monument in the 'Nazi death cult,' built to house the graves of Nazi party members killed in the putsch of 1923 (Bartetzko, 1987, p.136). Further, it also refers to an ancient Egyptian burial complex, identified by Karen Fiss as the complex of King Djoser at Saqqara (Fiss, 1995, p.109). As Bartetzko writes: 'The frontal tower of the pavilion of 1937 is a monumental and brutal transcription of these temples, or rather of these mausoleums. Beyond its imposing character, beyond all of its self-conscious calls to antiquity or Schinkel, it manifests the taste for death of the Nazi system. The frontal tower appeared like a funerary monument and the hall like a megalomaniacal sarcophagus' (Bartetzko, 1987, p.137). Far from calling to mind the sunny and healthy days of ancient Greece the Deutsches Haus transported its spectators into the realm of death.

Not only did the pavilion building move from health to death, but so did Thorak's ideal sculpted figures, and in at least two ways. Both are captured perfectly in a pithy statement made by a contemporary observer of the Exposition, Christian Zervos, editor of *Cahiers d'art*. Zervos described the figures of Third Reich sculpture as 'beings carved out for sport, struggle, violence; depth is missing' (Ades, 1995, p.52). The first part of this statement shows us one modality of death: the classical Nazi subject as its inflictor. As Zervos observes, these

are beings created for struggle and most often they appear in attitudes of aggression, swords raised in mid-thrust, or brooding preparation for violence. But there is also another modality of death, gestured towards in Zervos' account of the Nazi subject's missing depth. Here the Nazi is not the agent of death but rather its victim – he is himself dead. This is precisely what we see in the figures guarding the entrance to the Deutsches Haus. For the art historian Dawn Ades they lack all 'signs of human sensibility or specific individual being' (1995, p.53). Far from these figures being signs of vitality and health, they are complete ciphers, empty vessels, dead.

How can we explain the uncanny contradiction between the putative aims of the building and its actual form? While what stands behind this is certainly a kind of generalised Nazi necrophilia (Bartetzko's Nazi 'taste for death'), it is also a consequence of the logic of monumentality. We can see in the *Deutsches Haus* a radicalized version of the desire to destroy in order to preserve that we witnessed in the discourse on the closing of the World's Columbian Exposition. This is evident if we look at the 'theory of ruin value,' the aesthetic system that underwrites all of Speer's work of this period. Speer commented:

❖ The idea was that buildings of modern construction were poorly suited to form that 'bridge of tradition' to future generations which Hitler was calling for. It was hard to imagine that rusting heaps of rubble could communicate these heroic inspirations which Hitler admired in the monuments of the past. My 'theory' was intended to deal with this dilemma. By using special materials and by applying certain principles of statics, we should be able to build structures which even in a state of decay, after hundreds or (such were our reckonings) thousands of years would more or less resemble Roman models. ❧

(1970, p.56)

Speer then notes that while working on the Zeppelin Field in Nuremberg he prepared a 'romantic drawing' showing 'what the reviewing stand on the Zeppelin Field would look like after generations of neglect, overgrown with ivy, its columns fallen, the walls crumbling here and there, but the outlines still clearly recognizable,' a perspective that Hitler himself found 'logical and illuminating' (p.56). According to Mark Featherstone, 'Speer's ruin value can be seen as an architectural representation of an ideology that sought to trade the temporality of life for the eternity of death' (2005, p.302). For Featherstone:

↳ Insofar as Speer's theory of construction sought to mime the building projects of Greece and Rome, and therefore align the future ruins of Nazi Germany with the cultural superiority afforded these dead civilizations, it is possible to understand the structure of Nazi ideology in terms of a science fiction that aimed to achieve eternal life through the monumentalisation of death. That is to say that Speer's project encoded the notion that Nazi Germany could only achieve immortality through the pursuit of endless ruination. Only the absence of life would achieve the eternal presence demanded by the regime's necrophilic leadership. ➤

(p.302)

Faced with the inevitability of transience and forgetting, Speer could only build the Thousand-Year Reich in the eternal kingdom of death. In contrast to the buildings of the Chicago World's Fair which were built in order to be used and only later became the objects of destructive fantasies, Speer's buildings were not designed primarily with life and use in mind, but were conceived, from the outset under the sign of death, as decaying ruins. As an avatar of the nation, Speer's building was always already a corpse. And in this respect it must be considered a radicalisation of the paranoid aggressivity discussed by Huyssen. For in contrast to Wagner, in whose work violence is an index of the tension between monumentality and ephemerality, the Deutsches Haus stands as a monument to a sado-masochistic worldview that sees violence and death as the very fabric of the universe.

Back to the Future

In the years since the Second World War there has been a wholesale turn away from monumentality in art and culture. The reasons for this shift have been extensively (and humorously) catalogued by Huyssen:

The monumental is aesthetically suspect because it is tied to nineteenth-century bad taste, to kitsch, and to mass culture. It is politically suspect because it is seen as representative of nineteenth-century nationalisms and of twentieth-century totalitarianisms. It is socially suspect because it is the privileged mode of expression of mass movements and mass politics. It is ethically suspect because in its preference for bigness it indulges in the larger-than-human, in the attempt to overwhelm the individual spectator. It is psychoanalytically suspect because it is tied to narcissistic delusions of grandeur and

to imaginary wholeness. It is musically suspect because, well, because of Richard Wagner.

(1996, pp.189190)

Deeply suspicious of this degraded monumentalism, the artists of the late twentieth century moved in the opposite direction, developing a wide variety of ephemeral art practices, whether performance art, landscape art or site-specific work. This period also saw the return of the ephemeral pavilion. Instead of permanence and monumentality, these pavilions once again began to explore transitoriness and absence.

Perhaps the most notable collection of such pavilions was commissioned by London's Serpentine Gallery. Since 2000 the gallery has commissioned leading international architects to design pavilions which are sited in the park for a three-month period. These structures can be seen as a return to an eighteenth-century tradition of the folly. Liberated from the rigors and demands of permanent construction, the participating architects have designed experimental and whimsical structures that seek to push the boundaries of architecture while encouraging sociability, imagination and play in the spectators and users of these spaces. In what seems to be a self-conscious nod to the folly tradition with its roots in the *papilio*, the inaugural pavilion building by Zaha Hadid was a reinvention of the tent.

Subsequent pavilions would explore other forms of ephemeral architecture, the highpoint coming in 2009 with the cloud-like structure designed by Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa of the leading Japanese architecture practice SANAA. An aluminum roof supported on the slenderest of columns, the pavilion looks like a postmodern descendent of the Turkish kiosk. According to the architects, 'the Pavilion is floating aluminium, drifting freely between the trees like smoke. The reflective canopy undulates across the site, expanding the park and sky. Its appearance changes according to the weather, allowing it to melt into the surroundings. It works as a field of activity with no walls, allowing uninterrupted view across the park and encouraging access from all sides. It is a sheltered extension of the park where people can read, relax and enjoy lovely summer days' (Serpentine Gallery Pavilion, 2009). Making use of asymmetric composition, winding paths, water and lighting effects, Sejima and Nishizawa have extended the eighteenth-century picturesque tradition.

In their description of their building tropes of liquidity predominate. In contrast to the heaviness and solidity of monumental architecture, the building refuses to stand still. It melts and flows, changing from



Figure 1.5: Zaha Hadid, Serpentine Gallery Pavilion, 2000. Courtesy of the Serpentine Gallery. Photograph: H el ene Binet.



Figure 1.6: SANAA (Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa), Serpentine Gallery Pavilion, 2009. Courtesy of the Serpentine Gallery. Photograph: Nick Guttridge.

one moment to the next. Further, this structure seeks not to convince, awe or terrorise, but to inspire reverie. Like the folly, this pavilion is a room for dreaming. This air of enchantment was captured by Julia Peyton-Jones, Director, and Hans Ulrich Obrist, Co-Director, of the Serpentine Gallery, who noted that 'Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa's design embraces the parkland around the Serpentine Gallery as never before with an extraordinarily innovative design, which reveals the subtle play on light and perception so characteristic of their work. This Pavilion will be a wonderful addition to London's landscape this summer. It is our dream come true' (Serpentine Gallery Pavilion, 2009).

Another recent pavilion takes the liquidity and ephemerality at the heart of Sejima and Nishizawa's structure further still. Developed for the 2008 Zaragoza World Expo, the MIT-designed Digital Water Pavilion not only takes metaphorical inspiration from water, but actually uses the element as one of the structure's main building materials. The only solid element of the pavilion is the roof – a 400mm thick structure covered with water which is supported by moveable pistons which can bring it up or down. The walls of the structure itself are made entirely of water and digital technology makes them interactive. Using high-speed computer-controlled solenoid valves, the walls can be configured to display text, patterns or images, or to respond dynamically to input from sensors. Drawing on the homology between water and

digital code immortalised by *The Matrix*, Carlo Ratti, head of MIT's SENSEable City Laboratory, describes the pavilion thus: 'The opening and closing of valves, at high frequency, produces a curtain of falling water – a pattern of pixels created from air and water instead of illuminated points on a screen. The entire surface becomes a one-bit deep digital display that continuously scrolls downward' (MIT Digital Water Pavilion, 2013).

Like the 2009 Serpentine Gallery pavilion, MIT's Digital Water Pavilion takes inspiration from architectural history and reinterprets it for the present. In comments that resonate with eighteenth-century landscape architect Jean-Marie Morel's assessment of the key role of water in building and design, William J. Mitchell, head of MIT's Design Laboratory and former dean of architecture at MIT, has noted that: 'Water has long been recognized as one of the most dynamic and engaging elements of urban public space. For centuries, architects have shaped and directed it by means of channels and pipes, nozzles, valves, and pumps. The technology of digital water walls, and its pioneering application in Zaragoza's Digital Water Pavilion, update this tradition for the digital era. Going forward, new combinations of sensor technology, embedded intelligence, networking, computer-controlled pumps and valves and other new technologies open up the exciting possibility of urban-scale, precisely controlled, highly interactive water' (MIT Digital Water Pavilion, 2013).



Figure 1.7: Clips of the MIT Digital Water Pavilion (Zaragoza World Expo, 2008) on YouTube.

Moreover, like the structures that sat in Morel's parks, MIT's pavilion is a profoundly ephemeral building. 'The design for the water pavilion grew out of a central challenge,' noted Carlo Ratti. It poses the question: 'How to make fluid, reconfigurable architecture?' (MIT Digital Water Pavilion, 2013). The use of new elements and technologies allows for a radical re-imagining of many of the verities of architectural practice. 'This capability enables architects to challenge many traditional ideas about architectural form,' writes Mitchell. 'Doors, for example, need not have fixed locations. When you walk up to them, water walls can open like the Red Sea for Moses, and then seamlessly close behind you.' (MIT Digital Water Pavilion, 2013). No longer constrained by fixed elements, the Digital Water Pavilion raises the possibility of fluid, mobile buildings, metamorphosing at will. 'The Digital Water Pavilion illustrates how buildings of the future may change their appearance and form from moment to moment, based on necessity and use,' says Ratti. 'It is not easy to achieve such effects when dealing with concrete, bricks and mortar. But this becomes possible with digital water, which can appear and disappear' (MIT Digital Water Pavilion, 2013). And indeed, this ephemerality applies not only to the appearance and form of the building but to the very presence of the building itself. It has been designed so that the pistons

can lower the roof all the way to the ground, at which point the building disappears altogether.

These new temporary pavilions represent a decisive step away from the monumental structures which dominated pavilion building for so much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Deeply ephemeral and devoted to whimsy and pleasure, they forsake the obsession with disappearance and the psychotic sublime to which it all too often gave rise. Yet, instead of merely being the opposite of the monumental tradition, perhaps buildings such as the Digital Water Pavilion and the Serpentine Pavilions of Hadid and SANAA represent a move beyond this kind of oppositional thinking. They should be seen as a kind of *Aufhebung*, bringing together monumentality and ephemerality; a kind of anti-monumental monumentality. For Andreas Huyssen this is 'a monumentality that can do without permanence and without destruction, that is fundamentally informed by the modernist spirit of a fleeting and transitory epiphany, but that is no less memorable or monumental for that' (Huyssen, 1996, p. 198). Nomadic installations and ephemeral events, these pavilions have been disseminated and memorialised by contemporary forms of media. Lasting mere moments, the reverie and pleasure they inspire guarantee them a long life in the archives of memory.

Bibliography

- 1 Ades, D. (1995) 'Paris 1937: Art and the Power of Nations' in D. Ades (ed.) *Art and Power: Europe under the Dictators, 1930–45*, London, Thames and Hudson in association with Hayward Gallery.
- 2 Aristotle (1981) *Aristotle's On the Soul (De Anima)*, Grinnell, Iowa, Peripatetic Press.
- 3 Bartetzko, D. (1987) 'Allemagne–Albert Speer' in B. Lemoine and P. Rivoirard (eds) *Paris 1937: Cinquantenaire De L'exposition Internationale Des Arts Et Des Techniques Dans La Vie Moderne*, Paris, Institut français d'architecture.
- 4 Bergdoll, B. (2000) *European Architecture, 1750–1890*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- 5 Bergdoll, B. (2009) 'The Pavilion and the Extended Possibilities of Architecture' in P.C. Schmal (ed.) *Der Pavillon: Lust Und Polemik in Der Architektur*, Ostfildern, Hatje Cantz Verlag.
- 6 Bussmann, K. (2009) 'The Pavilion: A History of Enduring Transience' in P.C. Schmal (ed.) *Der Pavillon: Lust Und Polemik in Der Architektur*, Ostfildern, Hatje Cantz Verlag.
- 7 Featherstone, M. (2005) 'Ruin Value' *Journal for Cultural Research*, vol.9, no.3 (2005), pp.301–20.
- 8 Fiss, K.A. (1995) 'The German Pavilion' in D. Ades (ed.) *Art and Power: Europe under the Dictators, 1930–45*, London, Thames and Hudson in association with Hayward Gallery.
- 9 Flaubert, G. ([1856] 2010) *Madame Bovary: Provincial Ways* (trans. L. Davis), New York, Viking.
- 10 Freud, S. (1975) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, The Norton Library, New York, Norton.
- 11 Habraken, N.J. (1972) *Supports: An Alternative to Mass Housing* (trans. B. Valkenburg Ariba), London, Architectural Press.
- 12 Horace, (2004) *Odes and Epodes* (trans. N. Rudd), The Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.
- 13 Huyssen, A. (1996) 'Monumental Seduction', *New German Critique*, vol.69, pp.181–200.
- 14 Junyk, I. (2006) 'The Face of the Nation: State Fetishism and Métissage at the Exposition Internationale, Paris 1937', *Grey Room*, no.23, pp.96–120.
- 15 Larson, E. (2003) *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair That Changed America*, New York, Crown Publishers.
- 16 'MIT Digital Water Pavilion Makes a Splash in Spain – MIT News Office.' <http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2008/zaragoza-tt0611.html> (accessed 1 January 2013).
- 17 Ozenfant, A. (1937) 'Notes d'un Touriste À L'exposition', *Cahiers d'art*, nos.8–10.
- 18 Porter, J.I. (2011) 'Sublime Monuments and Sublime Ruins in Ancient Aesthetics', *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, vol.18, nos.5–6, pp.685–96.
- 19 Richards, J. M. (1973) *The Castles on the Ground; the Anatomy of Suburbia* (2nd edn), London, John Murray.
- 20 Rousseau, J.-J. ([1761] 1968) *La Nouvelle Héloïse. Julie; or, the New Eloise: Letters of Two Lovers, Inhabitants of a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps* (trans. J.H. McDowell), University Park, PA, Pennsylvania State University Press.
- 21 Rousseau, J.-J. ([1782] 2011) *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (trans. R. Goulbourne), Oxford World's Classics, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- 22 Scobie, A. (1990) *Hitler's State Architecture: The Impact of Classical Antiquity*, University Park, PA, Pennsylvania State University Press.
- 23 'Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2009 by Kazuyo Sejima & Ryue Nishizawa of Sanaa 12 July–18 October' http://www.serpentinegallery.org/2009/02/SANAA_serpentine_gallery_pavilion_2009.html (accessed 1 January 2013).
- 24 Speer, A. (1970) *Inside the Third Reich: Memoirs* (trans. R. Winston and C. Winston), New York, Macmillan.
- 25 Vidler, A. (1983) 'A History of the Folly' in B.J. Archer and A. Vidler (eds) *Follies: Architecture for the Late-Twentieth-Century Landscape*, New York, Rizzoli.