Theorising Between Space and Place
A Case Study on Perceptive Architecture – Serpentine Gallery Pavilions

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Abstract: The paper focuses on an example of the fragile balance between theory and practice within the space-place debate. Thus, the introduction outlines several theoretical constructs, which offer a broad view of the complex phenomenon of the space-place study. The article then concentrates on the experiment proposed by the Serpentine Gallery, in London, which is unique in this context. Consequently, this part of Kensington Gardens has transformed itself, little by little, into a genuine architectural laboratory, which analyses and exhibits the attitude towards the space-place relationship, as it is understood by the different starchitects who have built here.

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Theorising between space and place

Space is one of those concepts we use per se. In the everyday use, even the difference between space and place seems irrelevant. However, from the point of view of the creator of space and place, one has to study the everyday events, meanings and experiences. Moreover, because "man is by nature a social animal,"[1] the creation of place has to be a social manifestation, as well.

Each "social being," using Henri Lefebvre's[2] words, aspires to produce their own space. The production of space is essential to the human kind, especially from a social point of view. A failure of this process would produce a very strange entity, doomed to a purely ideological, abstract existence which "would fall to the level of folklore and sooner or later disappear altogether, thereby immediately losing its identity, its denomination and its feeble degree of reality".[3]

Thus, Lefebvre, establishes a generating relationship between space and the moving body – a theory resumed slightly different by Yi-Fu Tuan[4] and, later on, even

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[1] Aristotel, *The Politics*, trans. L. Carnes (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 1169 b.

[2] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford, Cambridge MA: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1991), 53.

[3] Ibid., 53.

[4] Cf. Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia – A study Of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, And Values* (Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1974); Yi-Fu Tuan, *Place and Space – The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1977); Yi-Fu Tuan *Landscapes of Fear* (New York NY: Pantheon Books, 1979).

by Michel de Certeau.[5] It is such a relationship, which eventually reaches a point where it turns into dependency: the body – which is already space in itself – produces, generates space through its every movement; while a space, lacking in movement, ceases to exist. Space becomes for Lefebvre subjective, precisely because such a dependency relationship exists.

This subjective space – objective space couple, which characterises the general concept of space, in Lefebvre's view, has been converted by Tuan[6] into a new couple, namely the one of place-space. Even from the start, Tuan draws up a distinction between the two, which resembles very closely Lefebvre's theory, stating that space is intimately linked to movement, while place is to repose, to stop along the way.

However, Tuan's formulation has a far more phenomenological connotation, much closer to the writings of Christian Norberg-Schulz or Martin Heidegger – as in their work, place is intimately linked to and it even derives from the act of dwelling. The place, for Tuan, remains closely linked to the action of dwelling, as a manifestation of the everyday, but, at the same time, it remains a personal experience. In Tuan's interpretation, place equals security and stability, namely putting down roots and identifying one's self with the (new) place – quintessentially a concretion of value.[7]

Human geography, standing out as a theoretical field, especially during the 1970s 1980s, has been incredibly effervescent in theorising the concept of place, thus establishing the foundations of a new field of studies and producing reference texts – as already pointed out in Tuan's case. However, postmodern literature has decomposed the concept,[8] looking at it critically, as it was influenced by the effects of the global upon the local, integrating it in broader, interdisciplinary discussions, relating space to the social,[9] political[10] contexts, or, why not, simply to the everyday,[11] including racial or gender issues.[12] Such attempts generated ample studies, which made the field more permissive, anchoring it much more realistically in the immediate reality, in the everyday.

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[5] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley CA, Los Angeles CA, London: University of California Press, 1984).

[6] Cf. Tuan, *Topophilia*, Tuan, *Place and Space*, Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear*.

[7] Tuan, *Place and Space*, 12.

[8] Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place – A Philosophical History* (Berkeley CA, Los Angeles CA, London: University of California Press, 1998), 286.

[9] Cf. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1958); Frederick B. Walter, *Modern Systems Research for the Behavioral Scientist* (New York NY: Aldine Publishing Company, 1968).

[10] Cf. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany NY: SUNY Press, 2007); Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.

[11] Cf. Michel Foucault, "Different Spaces", in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley et al., vol. 2 in *Essential Works of Foucault* 1954–1984, ed. Paul Rabinow, 175–185 (New York NY: The New Press, 1998); Edward Soja, "Thirdspace: Expanding the Scope of the Geographical Imagination", in *Human Geography Today*, ed. Doreen Massey, John Allen and Phill Sarre (Cambridge MA: Polity Press, 1999); Edward C. Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 1976), 260–278.

[12] Cf. Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill (London, New York NY: Continuum, 2005), second edition.

One of the most interesting contributions brought to this concept belongs to Edward Soja.[13] Soja – just as Lefebvre – considers that this duality of imagined space and real space, or practiced space and represented space, produce a reductionistic point of view. Although this path is part of a long row of dichotomies, considered to be references of modern thought – for example abstract–concrete, real–imagined, local–global, micro–macro, natural–cultural, centre–periphery, man–woman, bourgeois–proletarian, capitalism–socialism[14] – Soja, alongside Lefebvre, considers that this path is lacking precisely the complexity of truly experimenting lived space. The main argument being the fact that there will always be a third possibility, an-Other term or *Il y a toujours l'Autre*, which will not belong to any of the two trenchant categories of "either–or". Thus, Soja proposes a third category – inspired by Lefebvre's theory, *une dialectique triplicité*, and maybe even by Michel Foucault's heterotopia[15] – a much more flexible category, a category of inclusion of "both-and-also": the Thirdspace. It is an inclusive theory, postmodern in character, which one might discover in Robert Venturi's[16] writings, as well, formulated as "both–and". This layering and inclusion of as many meanings as possible, inclining to include all meanings, implies a greater acceptance and tolerance of "other spaces," of heterotopias.

As a concept, Thirdspace becomes a radically inclusive notion. If so far defining space, and especially place, was an act of exclusion, which identifies, selects and delimits a space with qualities; the postmodern moment becomes increasingly lax and permissive. Consequently, Soja's theoretical construct reaches a climax, which includes everything; it is a third type of space, a layer of the other.

In this context, the concept of place, the feeling of connection is felt differently among different social groups and even among different individuals. The difference can be noted in the ability of movement possessed by each individual. Thus, Doreen Massey's[17] construct starts out from the difference Tuan notices between space and place, nonetheless Massey goes one step further stating that, actually, the concept of place itself is influenced by one's ability of movement in space. Moreover, the concept of place is influenced by one's pressure exercised upon the flow of movement.

Thus, extending this chain of thoughts, based on the hypothesis that people can possess multiple identities, Massey extrapolates the concept to the concept of place, arguing that it can also possess multiple identities. The issue raised, in this case, is if this fact will be considered a source of conflict, or a resource, or even both! Massey insists on the fact that it is wrong to identify the concept of place with that of community. From a perspective as inclusive as Soja's, the author manages to look at the concept of place in a totally different light, seeing it as being non-static; the place ceases to be a noun – as it was for Norberg-Schulz. So, communities can survive without being in the same physical place, as networks – the family, the group of friends, the congregation, etc. On the other hand, there are few cases in which a place hosts a single community – seen as a

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[13] Soja, "Thirdspace", 260–278.

[14] Ibid., 268.

[15] Foucault, "Different Spaces", 175–185.

[16] Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York NY: The Museum of Modern Art, 1966, 1977), 23–33.

[17] Cf. Doreen Massey, "A Global Sense of Place", in eadem, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press), 1994.

homogenous social group – this situation resulting, most of the time, artificially, materialising itself as reservations.

One has to remark that, in the postmodern context, defining the concept of place as being "open and hybrid – a product of interconnecting flows – of routes rather than roots" (sic!)[18] is related more to the everyday. Consequently, the place seen as a process becomes a concept with a tremendous capacity of inclusion and flexibility, so that it can identify itself with real situations, which become increasingly complex.

The definition issued by Massey remains, with no doubt, one of the most important contemporary theories related to place, especially because it managed to critically counterbalance the notion of erosion of the concept of place. This notion of erosion sets in a negative light precisely these (contemporary) features of space which Massey attributed to the place seen as a process: mass communication, facilitating the mobility of individuals, and practically anything which could be linked to the consumerist society.

However, the erosion of the concept of place speaks precisely about the depersonalisation of space – meaning the return from place to space in Heideggerian terms –, about spaces which look, smell and are felt like being the same anywhere. Although Edward Relph identifies ways in which one unrestrainedly experiences space – namely pragmatic space, perceptual space or existential space – or ways which prove to be rather cerebral, conceptual – cognitive space or abstract space –, the author still considers that in our contemporary context one can still discuss the phenomenon of place eradication. This process manifests itself through the production of standardised landscapes, as a result of the amplification of insensitivity towards the meaning of place.[19] This path is central to Relph's work.[20] The author considers that today one is surrounded by a placelessness which is dissipated through the inability of the contemporary man to authentically relate to a place.

The most obvious manifestation of placelessness is experienced as a result of tourism, because it encourages the disneyfication, museification and futurisation of place.[21] Relph says that even the highway itself facilitates the destruction of place because, instead of linking places together, it actually isolates them, passing by the most important places out of practical reasons.

Marc Augé[22] proposes, as well, a theory of the erosion of the concept of place. Thus, when Relph opposes the idea of place to the one of placelessness – which has a profoundly negative connotation –, Augé, on the other hand, speaks about the non-place. For the author, the non-place does not necessarily have a negative connotation, instead he simply adjoins this concept to the one of place – the non-place is the space

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[18] Tim Cresswell, *Place – A Short Introduction* (Malden MA, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 53.

[19] David Seamon and Jacob Sowers, "Place and Placelessness, Edward Relph", in *Key Texts in Human Geography*, ed. P. Hubbard, R. Kitchen and G. Vallentine, 43–510 (London: Sage, 2008), 44.

[20] Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 82; *apud* Cresswell, *Place*, 44.

[21] Cf. Dana Pop, "Aspects of Identity in Contemporary Architectural Space", *Philobiblon* XVIII/2 (2013): 415–426.

[22] Marc Augé, *Non-places – An Introduction to Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe (London, New York NY: Verso, 2008), 46–47.

which has opposite qualities from the ones of the place, however it exists as a physical space in the everyday.[23]

The space of the non-place does not encourage the manifestation of the self, nor does it encourage the establishment of relationships with others, it only encourages solitude and similarity. Augé goes on saying that it is the opposite of a utopia, as well: it exists in the everyday – unlike utopias – and it does not contain any type of relationship which might be labelled as social.[24]

An important issue which needs to be emphasised is the fact that, although Massey and Augé reach different conclusions, both of them base their theories on casual observations of the everyday. They both start out form the immediate reality, from situations which everyone encounters on a daily basis. Massey, for example, describes what she notices while simply walking through her neighbourhood. With Augé one can remark, by the way he structures his speech, that his observations are based on hours on end spent in airports, waiting lounges, railway stations or hotel lobbies – all constructed on the same pattern of transit space, the archetype of nomadic spatiality, actually of the non-place.

This contextualisation of the place in the everyday is extremely important because, as Tim Cresswell remarks, places are most often the product of everyday activities.[25] This mirroring of the everyday as the perception of the concept of place is very present in Michel de Certeau's texts.[26] For Certeau, place is "an instantaneous configuration of positions,"[27] namely a freeze at a certain moment of the interrelationships established between the elements which coexist simultaneously in a given space. Place is for Certeau a malleable entity, re-definable at any moment. However, Certeau's space maintains a certain ambiguity, being rather the result of different tensions.[28] This space is lacking a particular quality or feature of selfness, which can be found in the case of a place – space is fluid, malleable and uncertain. What is interesting is the fact that, for Certeau, space and place are both capable of coexisting, being connected with ties which go both ways.

For David Harvey[29] – who is basing his theories on the manner in which Certeau treats place as being the result of daily activities and movements, and also revising the generating relationship between space and the movement of the body, formulated by Lefebvre – place becomes malleable, flexible and transformable, according to the everyday needs, reproducing and redefining itself daily, according to each type of activity.

The three studies of an inclusive approach – Soja's "Thirdspace," the place seen as a process by Massey and the place as the experience of the everyday by Harvey – manage to place the concept of place in an entirely new and very different light from Norberg-Schulz's static and well-anchored concept. Genius loci, in its postmodern

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[23] Augé, *Non-places*, 43.

[24] Ibid., 90.

[25] Cresswell, *Place*, 82.

[26] de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

[27] Ibid., 171.

[28] Ibid., 173.

[29] David Harvey, "Individual spaces and times in social life", in idem, *The Condition of Postmodernity – An enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, 211-225 (Cambridge MA, Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

form, becomes a process, a flux, a space which is lived through experimentation, ceasing to be used as a shelter that provides security and stability.

Places can be – and actually are – produced, however they are not final products, ready-made products, but rather they initiate a space which behaves more as a process – if one were to borrow Massey's term. In this context, Certeau, by relating place to the everyday experience, practically links the activity of micro-cultures, their daily manifestations with the place they identify themselves with and thus determine it.

The issue raised now – form the point of view of the different interpretations of the concept of place – is when and how architecture produces places. Put in the simplest of terms, architecture is capable of delimiting, of organising space by splitting it into two with a wall, thus distinguishing between interior and exterior. However, the pure enclosure of a space does not automatically transform it into a place. Space – architectural space in this context – becomes a place only when one's perception upon it is transformed. Practically, one identifies a built space as a place when its image – the mental representation one builds – begins to have a meaning; it is somehow representative. Namely these are the architectural spaces which have the ability of becoming landmarks, of leaving a trace in the collective consciousness. Or they can be a temporary intervention which, for a limited period of time, manages to introduce order into an otherwise homogenous space, manages to organise, orient it and make it visible to the passer-by – in other words to change the perception upon it – such is the case of the Serpentine Gallery Pavilions.

Perceptive architecture – Serpentine Gallery Pavilions
In the year 2000, Julia Peyton-Jones, the Co-Director of Serpentine Gallery, initiated an experimental architecture programme, which has been held annually ever since. The aim of this project is designing and placing a temporary structure for three months on the Gallery's lawn. Thus, for over a decade, some of the most world famous architects have been exhibiting their work here. The only criterion which is imposed is that the architect or firm should not have designed anything in the UK previous to receiving the invitation.[30]

The proposed experiment is, in a way, unique. Although temporary architecture, mobile architecture, "soft," "disposable" or "throw away" architecture – as Augustin Ioan[31] named it – is lately gaining more exposure, the rather controlled conditions – always the same lawn – offered by the Gallery transform this project into an architectural laboratory where one can analyse and test the attitude showed by different (st)architects towards the space-place relationship. Even though this inflatable, foldable and dismantled architecture is not connected to a specific site, contextually and structurally speaking – as is the case of permanent architecture – still, precisely through its ephemerality, temporary architecture becomes the ideal means to experiment the definition and meaning of the place – from an architectural point of view.

The proposals designed during the last 14 years[32] show a matching number of attitudes towards the designing process itself, towards the motivation that backs the

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[30] Serpentine Gallery, "Architecture", *Serpentine Gallery*, accessed June 14, 2013, http://www.serpentinegallery.org/architecture.html.
[31] Augustin Ioan, *Khora* (Bucharest: Editura Paideia, 1999), 19.
[32] There have been built 13 pavilions, the 2004 Pavilion designed by MVRDV, was not build because of its costs – that is why this particular pavilion is not part of the current analysis. In

idea of producing architecture and also towards depicting how theoretical constructs regarding the space-place relationship can physically manifest themselves. An overall and quick analysis divides the pavilions into two major categories.

The first one comprises pavilions conceived more as a visitable sculpture, as a human scale object and not as a place. There are several pavilions which behave as a gadget – an object with an extraordinary design, maybe even a structural experiment, but which does not tackle the issue of space – the space it occupies and cuts out. The majority of these pavilions are impressive as structural innovations, but they do not raise the issue of space, of architectural spatiality. They remain architectures that fail to become places, they remain simple objects.

The second category includes pavilions with a clear attitude towards the meanings of space, place, the transformation of space into place or the establishment of relationships between different spaces – for example interior-exterior, old-new, natural-manmade, etc. Although, from a formal point of view, the pavilions included in this category vary from a place simply delimitated by a horizontal plan, raised above the ground – as is the case of the 2009 Pavilion designed by Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa of SANAA – to a totally clustered place – the 2011 proposal, hortus conclusus, signed by Peter Zumhtor – one can still distinguish a common feature, namely the focus on the quality of space.

The object pavilion
The pavilion designed by Zaha Hadid[33] in 2000, being the one that started this programme, clearly belongs to the first category. The project actually states, on a conceptual level, that its structure: "radically reinvented the accepted idea of a tent or a marquee".[34] From a perceptual point of view, the Pavilion does not raise many issues. Obviously, there is a certain sensibility in the way it opens itself towards the natural environment surrounding it, but it does that without trying to resonate with it in a certain manner. The idea its concept emphasises is to impress through the structure which is able to cover under a single surface the entire area of 600 square meters.

Oscar Niemeyer,[35] invited in 2003, wanted to make a statement through his pavilion, as well. His proposal is, in essence, a gesture. It does not aim to resonate with its context or the nature surrounding it, nor does it want to establish a dialog with the existing building. On the contrary, the composition can be seen as a white volume

2007, before Olafur Elíasson and Kjetil Thorsen's Pavilion was inaugurated, Zaha Hadid and Patrik Schumacher created a temporary installation – July 12-21, 2007 – for a fundraising gala this object was excluded as well, because of its reduced size – not being actually a pavilion; Serpentine Gallery, "Architecture".

[33] Serpentine Gallery, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2000 by Zaha Hadid", *Serpentine Gallery*, accessed June 14, 2013, http://www.serpentinegallery.org/2000/06/serpentine_gallery _pavilion_20_5.html; "Miscellaneous – Pavilions, installations and exhibitions", *El Croquis* 103 (2000): 224-35, 225.

[34] Serpentine Gallery, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2000 by Zaha Hadid".

[35] Serpentine Gallery, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2003 by Oscar Niemeyer", *Serpentine Gallery*, accessed June 14, 2013, http://www.serpentinegallery.org/2003/06/serpentine _gallery_pavilion_20_2.html.

lifted off the lawn and intersected by a red diagonal – the ramp that clearly delimits itself against the green background of the grass.

The Pavilion conformed to Niemeyer's principle that every project must be capable of summary in a simple 'sketch' and that once the support structure is finished the architecture should be more or less complete.[36]

Indeed, the Pavilion does match Niemeyer's tendencies for simple lines and shapes, and, even though it succeeds in being a well-proportioned object and complete, from a compositional point of view, the 2003 Pavilion does not speak about space, it does not propose a place, but just an image.

In 2006, Rem Koolhaas[37] – together with Cecil Balmond of Arup – had a spectacular proposal, from a structural point of view. The main attraction of the project is an inflatable and translucent canopy shaped like an egg which floats above a vertical cylinder, translucent as well. This inflatable volume is mobile and it can be raised or lowered in order to shelter the amphitheatre underneath, when the meteorological conditions require it. When speaking about the Pavilion, Cecil Balmond says:

"These Pavilions have evolved with various structural typologies and materials, provoking a debate on architecture; this year the exploration continues not only with typology and material but with the very definition of Pavilion."[38]

Thus, the main issue concerning the designers was experimenting on a structural level, playing with materials and – on a conceptual level – experimenting with the building type itself. When analysing it, the discourse lacks any reference to issues regarding space. The Pavilion is an object that landed on the lawn, without any reference to its context – it does not even deny it. It is simply indifferent to the space it is placed in.

The case of the 2005 Pavilion, designed by Alvaro Siza and Eduardo Souto de Moura[39] – once more in collaboration with Cecil Balmond of Arup –, is in some way different. As a discourse, the architects stated that their intention was to establish a dialog of spatial nature with the main building, and with the landscape as well:

"The result was a structure that mirrored the domestic scale of the Serpentine and articulated the landscape between the two buildings. The Pavilion was based on a simple rectangular form. It comprised interlocking timber beams, a material that accentuated the relationship between the Pavilion and surrounding Park."[40]

This two dimensional grid wears a clear mark – a mark made by a move of detachment, which lifts the grid off the horizontal plane. The final shape of the grid shows the effects left behind by a suction force created by the initial void which existed between the grid and the horizontal plane. In a way, one can still read this

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[36] Serpentine Gallery, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2003 by Oscar Niemeyer".

[37] Serpentine Gallery, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2006 by Rem Koolhaas and Cecil Balmond, with Arup", *Serpentine Gallery*, accessed June 14, 2013, http://www.serpentinegallery.org/2006/07/serpentine_gallery_pavilion_20_1.html.

[38] Serpentine Gallery, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2006 by Rem Koolhaas and Cecil Balmond, with Arup".

[39] Serpentine Gallery, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2005 by Alvaro Siza and Eduardo Souto de Moura with Cecil Balmind -Arup", *Serpentine Gallery,* accessed June 14, 2013, http://www.serpentinegallery.org/2005/06/serpentine_gallery_pavilion_20.html.

[40] Serpentine Gallery, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2005 by Alvaro Siza and Eduardo Souto de Moura with Cecil Balmind -Arup".

frozen movement in the pavilion's design, and, if we were to superimpose this image with Michel de Certeau and David Harvey's interpretation of place – according to whom the place is the result of daily activities and movements – we could state that the idea of place can be found in this type of architecture. Even so, at a closer glance, what Siza and Souto de Moura accomplished is not in fact a space, but a shape – their pavilion still remains an object and does not reach the state of being a space. The three dimensional grid the authors talk about, is merely a shell, an enclosure which covers a space – failing to become itself a space.

However, from a perceptual point of view, the 2005 Pavilion takes one step forward than the previous examples, because its authors planned to create a place – even if it was only a theoretical achievement. If one were to read their discourse between the lines, one could identify references to certain qualities attributed to space – the distorted grid, the dynamically shaped curve, the relationship between the Pavilion and the park. Thus, a space which possesses qualities – even if one were to solely consider Heidegger's definition – becomes a place. However, in this case, the place remains only a theoretical construct.

The place pavilion

Moving on to the second category of pavilions and taking into account the 13 years of experience, one can consider discussing a large number of places designed, built and dwelled on the lawn in front of the Serpentine Gallery. Borrowing Michel Foucault's term, one could even characterise the lawn as being a heterotopia which accumulates layer upon layer, place upon place, grids of spatial relationships, cuttings and transformed perspectives – summing up to different perceptual experiences. The uniqueness of this exercise consists in identifying the objects which can be considered to be places and relating them to one (or more) possible theoretical definitions of the concept.

Thus, proceeding chronologically, one engages in analysing the different spatial expressions and experiments which took place on the Serpentine lawn. Put differently, the possible physical definitions given to the space-place couple by architects will be analysed, as well as the practical methods of transgression, of cutting out space, of contextualising it, its degrees of permeability, degrees of delimitation, transparency and, finally, the manifestations of the place – in an architectural sense.

Daniel Libeskind • 2001 Pavilion

The 2001 Pavilion, designed by Daniel Libeskind,[41] presents a volume inspired by origami figures – which also suggested the name of the Pavilion, Eighteen Turns. Although the inspiration is such a small and fragile object, Libeskind manages to transform his pavilion from an object into a spatial experience. The Pavilion's space is cut out and wrapped by a steel ribbon, however, without being completely separated from the exterior space. Thus, an interesting relationship is born between exterior and interior: although the boundaries are not explicit, being more suggestive than material, the visitor can still very clearly distinguish where the interior ends and the exterior

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[41] Serpentine Gallery, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2001 by Daniel Libeskind with Arup", *Serpentine Gallery*, accessed June 15, 2013, http://www.serpentinegallery.org/ 2001/06/serpentine_gallery_pavilion_20_4.html.

begins. In addition, on one hand, the smooth surface of the aluminium panels cut the space just like a razor blade, and, on the other, they reflect the texture of the vegetation hosting the Pavilion. On the outside, the broken folds and sharp angles make the Pavilion seem cold and distant, while on the inside the wooden surface is warm and surprises offering astonishing perspectives "highlighting the beauty of the Gardens and their connection to the Gallery".[42]

Although it is not an innovative proposal from a structural point of view, Libeskind's Pavilion timidly manages to become a *place*: it cuts out an accidental volume of space and it endows it with *quality*. "*Eighteen Turns* was a special place of discovery, intimacy and gathering"[43] (italics added).

Libeskind is a place creator; he has a certain flair for creating through architecture something more than just enclosures, limits or folds of space. As an architect, he manages to play with the visitor's mind or to surprise them with unexpected situations and transpose them into another perceptual world. He accomplished this in the case of complex building types, of permanent architecture, as well.

For Libeskind, space, in itself, becomes the actual building material, replacing the conventional building materials. He has the ability of provoking very intense emotions, which can be, at times, contradictory.

Toyo Ito • 2002 Pavilion

Toyo Ito has a Japanese cultural background, thus being part of a culture where space and spatiality have different meanings than in the European frame of reference. On the one hand, the Japanese context has a certain type of playfulness, a ludic quality which is more frequently met than in the European one. On the other hand, space, in itself – including traditional architecture – has more permissive boundaries. The difference between interior and exterior is not as clear as it is in the European culture – the limits are more diffuse and are somehow more metaphorical than physical. The limit, the boundary of the space is achieved in a much more sophisticated and subtle manner. Koji Taki[44] states that Ito has managed to conceive new meanings for the term of "light" architecture, a particular architecture which is felt as being "ephemeral". The quality of the space – especially its fluidity – has been a constant preoccupation of Ito's:

> "Ten years ago I was going to produce fluid space through an expression which is different from pure geometry […]. However, the method of structural analysis, which is not separate from the method of articulation by means of conventional geometry, prevented me from producing the fluid space. I could not get the new spaces. They became a heavy expression. They were confined to the range of Euclidean geometry.
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> I think that the present day city space is still unable to escape from the modernist grid. It is a fundamentally modern artificial environment. People are discussing environmental problems now. However, the space has not changed at all. The space that contains the fluid of nature is necessary for us. Although

[42] Serpentine Gallery, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2001 by Daniel Libeskind with Arup".
[43] Ibid.
[44] Koji Taki, "A Conversation with Toyo Ito", *El Croquis* 123 (2004): 6–15, 6.

Sendai [Mediatheque] was isolated, what I wanted to achieve there was to produce a free space that was similar to nature."[45]

Starting with the Sendai Mediatheque project – which represented a turning point in Ito's career – we can spot several clear characteristics which were to define his style:

"lightness and simplicity, the negotiation of formality, flexibility and spatial fluidity, architecture as thin, transparent wrapper, as an unstable, transitory phenomenon, as a whirlpool and filter of natural and artificial floes, as the mark and landscape of human actions, as a crossing and passage point of activities, as a permeable membrane between interior and exterior."[46]

The commission for the 2002 Pavilion[47] came at a moment when Ito – in his search for a fluid space – was interested in non-linear design. These interests were a perfect match with Cecil Balmond's appetite for studying "unstable things"[48] – expressing, for example, frozen movements in different phases. Thus emerged the idea of an algorithm – a rule which determines an apparently random composition. In the case of the Serpentine Pavilion, the starting point was a cube articulated through the algorithm of a square which is rotated and expanded, at the same time. Finally, a cube emerges, which is then cut by a network of random lines which define transparent or translucent triangles and trapezoids. These manage to induce a feeling of perpetual movement upon the space – "as if it were a structure in constant rotation".[49] From a perceptual point of view, the composition displaces a certain volume of space, which is then fragmented, reconstructed and twirled. The perspective is thus cut by all these transparent panels, restructuring it into a kaleidoscopic image. Thus, the perception of the reality gains a ludic dimension – so typical for the Japanese space – and, at the same time, a dynamic one, as well: from each point of the pavilion the surrounding reality is recomposed differently in an opaque-translucent-transparent game.

"The design begins with an incomplete, de-centred square that is swivelled off the building plan, making the order imperceptible in the end result. There is an underlying formal structure, although it does not exist consciously (perhaps it does so subconsciously), projecting a dynamic feeling."[50]

Besides the structural ingenuity of combining the structural elements with the enveloping ones, the Serpentine Pavilion succeeds in reorganising and restructuring space, transforming it into a place.

The place proposed by Ito has a peculiar quality: it is not the ordinary space used by architecture – enclosed, capsulated, clearly labelled as interiority – it is rather a

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[45] Taki, "A Conversation with Toyo Ito", 13.

[46] Juan Antonio Cortés, "Beyond Modernism, Beyond Sendai – Toyo Ito's search for a new organic architecture", *El Croquis* 123 (2004): 17–43, 19.

[47] Cf. Toyo Ito, "Structural Expression – Direct from Materials – The Pavilions of Bruges and London", *The Japan Architect* 47 (2002): 4–7; Thomas Madlener, "Temporary Pavilion in London", *Detail* 9 (2002): 1028–1029; Serpentine Gallery, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2002 by Toyo Ito and Cecil Balmond with Arup", *Serpentine Gallery*, accessed June 16, 2013, http://www.serpentinegallery.org/2002/06/serpentine_gallery_pavilion_20_3.html.

[48] Taki, "A Conversation with Toyo Ito", 12.

[49] Cortés, "Beyond Modernism, Beyond Sendai", 31.

[50] Ibid., 31.

space which is trying to escape, to remain exterior, although it is interior, which is playful and that recomposes its own kaleidoscopic reality and where the only thing that matters is light. Ito's architecture is an experimental space, a diffuse place, having the imprecise quality of being "blurring architecture".[51]

Ólafur Elíasson and Kjetil Thorsen • 2007 Pavilion

Experimenting with space has become a profession for Ólafur Elíasson. Since 1995, when he moved to Berlin, Elíasson, together with his team – which has reached approximately 70 people – produces installations, art projects, text and concepts about space. One of the most interesting experiments is the meeting he organises almost yearly since 2006, entitled "Life is space".[52] This event, invariably lasting for only one day, is an informal meeting between scientists, artists, savants, dancers, theoreticians and experts of movement, who discuss, share and present their opinions and experiments related to space, extent and space practise.

In this context, the 2007 Serpentine Pavilion project followed somehow naturally. Elíasson collaborated for this project with Kjetil Thorsen, of Snøhetta. The idea of the project emerged from a discussion about shape. Elíasson says that a shape without content is meaningless and, taking it one step further, he argues that:

> "content is only content when it's real, and reality is only real when there's temporality. So we've tried to amplify the idea of content by giving the pavilion a shape that stretches temporality. 'Stretching' here means that it almost translates your presence into a temporal matter. […] we have focused on a ramp and the movement around the centre of the pavilion. It's almost like a centrifugal force. The dynamics involved in the pavilion's shape are closely related to how you experience it as you move through it. This, of course, suggests that the best way of seeing this pavilion is to involve yourself with it. And this is where the content is produced. Content is not just programmatic – it's also when people go from a state of indifference to a state of difference, it's creating difference. And if the shape of the pavilion can transport people from indifference to difference, whether they like it or not, we have already created something. This is why the sails, the floor, and the roof are a kind of animation. Every aspect of the design has been laid out to suggest that if you move, the pavilion will immediately look slightly different. And, of course, it's based on the quite simple idea that if you lift people off the ground, you challenge both their horizontal and vertical orientation."[53]

Elíasson's discourse is full of references attesting his openness towards other disciplines. This way of experiencing space through movement – actually defining place through movement – and seeing space as an evolving process, are the outcome of the

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[51] Dana Vais, *Global și local în arhitectura contemporană (Global and Local in Contemporary Architecture)* (Cluj-Napoca: U. T. Press, 2011), 113.

[52] Olafur Elíasson Studio, "Life is Space", *Olafur Elíasson Studio*, accessed June 18, 2013, www.olafureliasson.net/studio.html.

[53] Obrist, Hans U., "VII – The vessel interview, part I: NetJets flight from Berlin to Dubrovnik, 2007", in *Olafur Elíasson & Hans Ulrich Obrist: The Conversation Series* vol. 13, ed. Matthew Gaskins, 143-161, Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, 2008, 148.

conversations he had with Doreen Massey.[54] Elíasson's main focus is renegotiating the contact between space and the individual. Elíasson's place oscillates between the opaque enclosure of the central volume – a centred, introverted space which communicates with the exterior only through an ellipsoidal oculus – and the almost immaterial limit traced by the space of the ramp through its sunshades made out of twisted ropes. The dynamic ramp surrounding the central volume is exacerbated by the image of the sunshades – which generate an optical illusion of movement, emphasised when the visitor is also on the move. The 2007 Pavilion truly succeeds in experimenting with the space-place couple in all of the three dimensions, altering the perception on space, while reshaping its own space, as well.

Elíasson's research eventually led to an academic teaching experiment. In 2009 he founded Institut für Raumexperimente [the Institute for Spatial Experiment], a project enrolled with the Department of Visual Arts of the Arts University in Berlin. This project understands teaching as a process, as well as encouraging a multi-layered and multidirectional development.[55] When talking about the school, Elíasson says:

> "I hope the school participants – 'teachers' and 'students' alike – will enter the cacophony of voices that constitute its core. Giving and taking is equally distributed. Inspiration is for all. What we will produce in this encounter is reality. It will be a laboratory for experience, but probably nobody will see this experiment as being essentially a model until tomorrow."[56]

Above all, Elíasson's installations, experiments and school become a very concrete manner of applying, studying, observing and experimenting on all contemporary theories on space and place.

Frank Gehry • 2008 Pavilion

Frank Gehry's architecture can be probably best placed somewhere in between Baroque and postmodernism, being spiced up with a little deconstructivism. Gehry[57] is aware that, upon a closer look, his buildings may provoke anxiety states because they are very different from the conventional meaning and concept of a building. The space of Gehry's buildings is, usually, caught between two folds; it is a wrapped space, with soft edges, which surprises and captures the visitors somewhere between discomfort and excitement.

Gehry's architecture – if we were to be objective – does not necessarily create places, it rather creates an architecture in search for new formal expressions – a play of shapes, materials and light. Gehry's buildings are oversized sculptures, which host different functions. As the architect himself states, he spiritually feels closer to the artistic world than he does to architecture. His buildings truly show the fact that Gehry

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[54] Olafur Elíasson Studio, "Life is Space".

[55] Institut für Raumexperimente, "Nothing is Ever the Same", *Institut für Raumexperimente*, accessed June 18, 2013, www.raumexperimente.net/meta/nothing-is-ever-the-same/.

[56] Institut für Raumexperimente, "Nothing is Ever the Same".

[57] Esther M. Sternberg, *Healing Places: The Science of Place and Well-Being* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 126–128.

is an artist of textures and light.[58] (Pollack, 2006) The space is moulded by Gehry, just like a piece of clay. In the case of his buildings, space is not the background of a social activity, it is not designed to be lived in; it is rather a space that becomes an entity in itself, wanting to be gazed upon. It is a space which enchants the eye, but which possesses in itself such a powerful character that it cannot be embedded with the personality and character of its inhabitants. Gehry's space cannot be dwelled in a phenomenological sense.

However, in the case of the 2008 Pavilion, Gehry seems to have turned back in time designing an image which cites his own house in Santa Monica, California. Although he refuses to be labelled as a deconstructivist, in the case of the Serpentine Pavilion, Gehry decides to play with the boundaries of space and its quality of being interior or exterior – he composes, de-composes and re-composes parts of the building, generating a new spatiality. Space is no longer a unique and uniform volume, each of the canopies seem to have attached to it a slice of interiority, alternating with the remaining interspaces – or exteriorities.

As in the case of the Gehry residence, the Serpentine Pavilion seems to be unfinished, as well – it looks like a construction site frozen up at a random and indecisive moment. Its inspiration sources are multiple, oscillating between the catapult designed by Leonardo da Vinci and the ruins of abandoned beach booths.[59] The structure of the composition is rather simple: the central area is composed of four robust pillars tight together by beams of similar dimensions – a promenade linking the park with the gallery – and a network of glass canopies – the ludic element – which is bordered on both sides by steps and five elevated platforms, which mark the end of the promenade.[60] Although the composition is based on the trilithon structural principle, it ends up by recomposing the enveloping elements in an explosive movement, frozen up in a manner in which the space becomes multidimensional, generating a layering of places – the place for promenade, the place for discussions, the place for observations, the place for playing, the place for relaxation, the place for reflection.

> "From a distance, the pavilion – with its massive, steel-reinforced Douglas fir columns and beams and its roof of angled, suspended glass planes – looks like an explosion in an architecture factory. Up close, of course, it's a different story.
> The structure's expansive interior is classic Gehry: muscular but friendly. […] The hulking timbers were inspired by bridge designs from the ancient Romans and Leonardo da Vinci and illustrate Gehry's obsession with 'big wood'. The 'street' frames a view of the gallery, a diminutive neo-Classical-style building that none of the previous architects ever really addressed. […] Compared with

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[58] *Sketches of Frank Gehry*, director: Sydney Pollack, production: Ultan Guilfoyle, Sony Pictures Classics, 2006.

[59] Serpentine Gallery, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2008 by Frank Gehry", *Serpentine Gallery*, accessed June 18, 2013, http://www.serpentinegallery.org/2008/03/frank_gehry_pavilion_2008.html.

[60] Cf. Steve Rose, "A jangling mass on the Serpentine horizon", *the Guardian,* March 26, 2008, accessed June 20, 2013, http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/artblog/2008/mar/26/asnakingcoilontheserpenti?INTCMP=SRCH; Maev Kennedy, "A rainy first look at Gehry's summer pavilion", *the Guardian*, July 9, 2008, accessed June 20, 2013, http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2008/jul/09/art.architecture2.

its predecessors, this pavilion looks almost primitive. Gehry calls it a reaction to the computer-designed buildings that are so prevalent today."[61]

Gehry has a genuinely refined contextual sensitivity, which is obvious in the manner in which he integrates most of his buildings, and this quality transpires here, as well. The Pavilion he proposes is the materialisation of a playful transition between the permanent gallery and the park's organic vegetation. From a compositional point of view, this "street" which he creates becomes the space, the place of movement between the gallery and nature, integrating both, emphasising them, by composing them as main perspective points. With this small Serpentine Pavilion, Gehry succeeds in superimposing several places, several ways in which the Pavilion can be experienced, dwelled and viewed. However, at the same time, Gehry also succeeded in tracing a link between the built and the natural – a contextualist link which highlights both ends of the promenade.

Gehry is very much in command of his abilities to work with and create space, thus achieving to elevate architecture to a state of ludic experiment, a state of enjoying the architectural promenade, of experimenting with the limits of the concept of space – with spatiality seen as an artistic concept.

"It's not new that architecture can profoundly affect a place, sometimes transform it. Architecture and any art can transform a person, even save someone. It can for children – for anyone. It still does for me."[62]

Kazuyo Sejima și Ryue Nishizawa • 2009 Pavilion

The architecture of the SANAA partners – Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa – is not part of the Japanese mainstream architecture. Their architecture – of a profound Japanese character – establishes a feeling of reciprocity between the interior and the exterior: the exterior is perpetually trying to cross over into the interior and to leave its mark, while the interior is permanently trying to open itself to the exterior. The space – caught in between interiority and exteriority – thus becomes a means of communication.[63] The architecture produced by SANAA has been labelled as "a new innocence"[64] – an architecture which has a ludic dimension, without actually being childish –, pure architecture – but lacking any purist or modernist connotations: it is a playful architecture which makes one feel playful, as well. It is a game of architecture which creates new, very sensible spaces of a human scale, but which, at the same time, propose surprising spatial combinations and compositions.

The architecture of SANAA is an extra light architecture – a quality due to the materials being used and, even more, due to the fact that the architecture is being

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[61] Pilar Vildas, "Butterfly Fracture", *The New York Times*, August 15, 2008, accessed July 20, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/17/magazine/17Style-t.html?_r=0.

[62] Craven, Jackie, "Frank Gehry Talks Frankly", *About.com*, accessed June 20, 2013, http://architecture.about.com/od/20thcenturytrends/a/Frank-Gehry-Interview.htm.

[63] Cf. Mohsen Mostafavi, "A Conversation with Kazuyo Sejima & Ryue Nishizawa", *El Croquis* 155 (2011): 6–16, 11; Mohsen Mostafavi, "Inorganic Architecture", *El Croquis* 155 (2011): 245–251.

[64] Mostafavi, "A Conversation with Kazuyo Sejima & Ryue Nishizawa", 11.

treated as being rather something temporary, modifiable, and not being characterised by the solidity of European buildings.

> "Architecture in Tokyo is really light. Because of the climate, we appreciate inside/outside in a kind of even way. Then we also have earthquakes, so our buildings must be very light to withstand them. There are many reasons why architecture is not that heavy in our case."[65]

Besides the technical motivation, the architects of SANAA are trying to look for a new approach in dealing with space, which probably has more in common with art than architecture. Nishizawa seems to be fascinated by the way in which artists understand and approach space. He sees their technique as being more primitive, a more direct manner of working with space – an approach very close to his personal purism. Although SANAA creates a similar space, theirs has a more profound architectural meaning because, besides being perceptual, space has to be, first of all, functional. Their connection to the world of art becomes obvious in the fact that artists seem to understand better the motivations behind the spaces created by SANAA, even more than architects do.[66]

When reading between the lines of the architecture produced by SANAA, one can observe that their 2009 Pavilion[67] is part of their natural conceptual path. When talking about the boundaries of space, this Pavilion is probably the most minimalistic proposal yet. Practically, the difference between the space of the Pavilion and the surrounding space limits itself to a horizontal plane which is covered by a diffuse canopy. Even so, the Pavilion succeeds in drawing a very clear contour in the landscape of the park.

> "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."[68]

The Pavilion designed by SANAA is the best choice in exemplifying the phenomenological concept of place. With a minimum effort, through the way in which it is lived – or even dwelled – the Pavilion becomes a place. The Pavilion's organic canopy seems to be the outcome of enclosing the interspaces between the trees. The Pavilion is thus organically linked to its natural context, however, at the same time, it

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[65] Ibid., 11.

[66] Ibid., 16.

[67] Cf. Serpentine Gallery, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2009 by Kazuyo Sejima & Ryue Nishizawa of SANAA", *Serpentine Gallery*, accessed June 21, 2013, http://www.serpentinegallery.org/2009/ 02/SANAA_serpentine_gallery_pavilion_2009.html; David Basulto, "The 2009 Serpentine Gallery Pavilion by SANAA", *ArchDaily,* July 11, 2009, accessed June 21, 2013, http://www.archdaily.com/28672/the-2009-serpentine-gallery-pavilion-sanaa/; Sebastiano Jordana, "SANAA's Serpentine Pavilion Design First Image", *ArchDaily,* April 1, 2009, accessed June 21, 2013, http://www.archdaily.com/18429/sanaas-serpentine-pavillion-design-first-image/.

[68] Serpentine Gallery, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2009 by Kazuyo Sejima & Ryue Nishizawa of SANAA".

remains in essence a building. Its shape, the use of aluminium as a reflecting surface and the incredibly minuscule dimension of its structural elements, transform the Pavilion into a chameleon-like object, hiding and camouflaging itself in nature. The Pavilion seems to have a life of its own, to breath, to become brighter or darker, keeping up with the rhythm of nature.

Unlike Frank Gehry's Pavilion, which is trying to establish a link between the permanent building of the Gallery and the park, the 2009 Pavilion is practically in a symbiotic relationship with the park, while totally ignoring the building of the Gallery. The space, the place SANAA created is dedicated to living in and for nature. The Pavilion seems to be an almost unstable instance, on one hand leaning towards the park, towards the earth, and, on the other, rising towards the sky. This varying height has an amazing effect upon the quality of space – which varies between the intimacy of a den and the open space, a space to meet in, a space for all.[69]

"Sejima and Nishizawa have created a stunning Pavilion that resembles a reflective cloud or a floating pool of water, sitting atop a series of delicate columns. The metal roof structure varies in height, wrapping itself around the trees in the park, reaching up towards the sky and sweeping down almost to the ground in various places. Open and ephemeral in structure, its reflective materials make it sit seamlessly within the natural environment, reflecting both the park and sky around it."[70]

The space flows steadily, with no right angles. The space is inspired by the movement of the body – by its organic and not linear nature. Consequently, the interactions among its visitors can be more diverse than a simple intersection – as is the case of linear compositions – proof that architecture can in fact influence behaviour.[71]

Jean Nouvel • 2010 Pavilion

"I'm no magician, but I try to create a space that isn't legible, a space that works as the mental extension of sight. This seductive space, this virtual space of illusion, is based on very precise strategies, strategies that are often diversionary. I frequently use what I find around me […]. So when I say that I play with depth of field, it's because I'm trying to foreground a series of filters that could lead anywhere – a kind of metanarrative – but from that point on, the intellect goes into action."[72]

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[69] Jonathan Glacey, "Sanaa unveils enchanting Serpentine pavilion", *The Guardian,* April 2, 2009, accessed June 21, 2013, http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2009/apr/01/architecture-design-serpentine-pavilion; David Basulto, "Opening day at the Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2009", *ArchDaily,* July 12, 2009, accessed June 21, 2013, http://www.archdaily.com/28711/opening-day-at-the-serpentine-gallery-pavilion-2009/.

[70] Serpentine Gallery, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2009 by Kazuyo Sejima & Ryue Nishizawa of SANAA".

[71] David Basulto, "Rolex Learning Center / SANAA", *ArchDaily,* February 18, 2010, accessed June 21, 2013, http://www.archdaily.com/50235/rolex-learning-center-sanaa/.

[72] Jean Baudrillard and Jean Nouvel, *The Singular objects for architecture*, trans. Robert Bononno (Minneapolis MN, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 6.

In the dialogue he had with Jean Baudrillard, Jean Nouvel speaks about space, about his space, a diffuse space, lacking clear limits, a space caught between the numerous layers of the envelope. Nouvel's space has an almost kinetic quality. His experiments are rather cerebral, calculated and in a perpetual search for a manner of diluting and re-interpreting space. Space is permanently trying to become a place, it attempts to sneak itself between the different layers which produce innumerable optical illusions, to dissimulate, to escape and produce the illusion of being interiority – of becoming architecture, Jean Nouvel's architecture.

> "With respect to what architecture has borrowed from cinema, the concept of sequence is very important, as Paul Virilio reminds us. In other words, concepts such as displacement, speed, memory seen in terms of an imposed trajectory, or a known trajectory, enable us to compose an architectural space based not only on what we see but on what we have memorized as a succession of sequences that are perceived to follow one another. From this point on, there are contrasts between what is created and what was originally present in our perception of space."[73]

Nouvel's space is a game, a game of reality and perception, between a physical dimension and a mental representation – the reconstruction of space in a virtual, personalised manner. Nouvel's architecture is, indeed, kinetic, joggling between spatial creation and spatial representation. His buildings define space, they enclose it; however, at the same time, they multiply it, reflect, distort and compress it. It is an architecture between real and virtual, an architecture which plays with the senses and with the boundaries of space. The architecture Nouvel creates is an architecture which truly tests the perceptual mechanism and the individual's ability of succeeding to map a diffuse and uncertain spatiality.

Baudrillard, even states that Nouvel conceives space "in such a way that architecture simultaneously creates both place and nonplace […] and thus creates a kind of apparition."[74] The 2010 Pavilion[75] exemplifies indeed this idea. If we were to characterise it with a single word, this would have to be dramatic. From a distance, the Pavilion seems to be an entanglement of shapes and materials, which vary from transparent and fuzzy to metallic shine and glass vibrations: a multitude of textures and densities, all in a single, invariable shade of scarlet red. For Nouvel, it is very important that the manner in which this building is perceived should be based less on the sense of sight and more on exploring the other senses. The 2010 Pavilion is probably the most sensorial one yet – a building which seeks to be smelled, touched

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[73] Baudrillard and Nouvel, *The Singular objects for architecture*, 6.

[74] Ibid., 9.

[75] Cf. Serpentine Gallery, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2010 by Jean Nouvel", *Serpentine Gallery*, accessed June 24, 2013, http://www.serpentinegallery.org/2010/03/jean_nouvel_serpentine_gallery_pavilion_2010.html; David Basulto, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2010: Jean Nouvel", *ArchDaily,* March 23, 2010, accessed June 24, 2013, http://www.archdaily.com/53661/serpentine-gallery-pavilion-2010-jean-nouvel/; Karen Cilento, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2010 / Jean Nouvel", *ArchDaily,* July 6, 2010, accessed June 24, 2013, http://www.archdaily.com/67566/serpentine-gallery-pavilion-2010-jean-nouvel-2/; Karen Cilento, "Update: Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2010 / Jean Nouvel", *ArchDaily,* July 16, 2010, accessed June 24, 2013, http://www.archdaily.com/69185/update-serpentine-gallery-pavilion-jean-nouvel/.

and which will be re-composed each time into a different mental representation. The use of the colour red next to its complementary pair – the green of the vegetation – produces the most powerful chromatic contrast there is. This red wraps the interior space, modifying it in an instant. The difference between the interior and the exterior is realised, in this case, not through the traditional manner of a plane – the wall, the screen or the panel – but through red light, through colouring the enclosed volume of space. The space of the Pavilion – the place that is created – is established through the vertical accent of the metallic panel, through the reflexion of the red glass, through the fluttering of the textile material, through the bumped texture of the polycarbonate and through its red shadows.[76]

> "In one way, the pavilion is a sun machine, a way of directing sunlight. In another, it is a fragile flower that rises in the park in the summer sun, wilts in the autumn, and then vanishes. Of course, red is also the colour of London in some ways – the buses, the pillar boxes, the soldiers of the Queen – but mostly red is about the sun."[77]

The 2010 Pavilion is truly a perceptual experiment. Interacting with it literally transforms: when one enters its space, one turns red – the light one sees is red, the air one breaths is red, the chair one sits on is red, the cup one drinks out of is red, the clothes one wears are red, one probably even ends up thinking red! It is a building, an architecture, which manages to redefine the interaction with space.

Nouvel is in a continuous search for a metaphysical definition of space. From this point of view, the Serpentine Pavilion is not by far the first of its kind. On the contrary, it is part of a vast experience of searching for a method to filter, reflect and compress space.

Jean Nouvel's space is empathetic, a space that resonates with those whom it shelters. The spaces created by Nouvel are experimental spaces, spaces which are attempting to test the perceptual limits, and precisely because of that, they are selfish, introverted, hermetical – metaphysical – spaces.

Peter Zumthor • 2011 Pavilion

Peter Zumthor claims that architecture is not a language, it is meant to be lived – one cannot dwell a language.[78] Zumthor rather relates architecture to the relationships one establishes with the place, with its memory, feeling or atmosphere.[79] Architecture, in Zumthor's vision, succeeds when it reflects the manner in which space is lived. Architecture, in general, has to be able to accumulate the traces of dwelling – all the scratches, splinters, cracks, bumps produced by the act of dwelling. For Zumthor, architecture becomes place when it is exposed to daily activities.

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[76] Cilento, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2010 / Jean Nouvel".

[77] Cilento, "Update: Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2010 / Jean Nouvel".

[78] Nico Saieh, "Multiplicity and Memory: Talking About Architecture with Peter Zumthor", *ArchDaily,* November 2, 2010, accessed June 25, 2013, http://www.archdaily.com/85656/multiplicity-and-memory-talking-about-architecture-with-peter-zumthor/.

[79] Jay Merrick, "Peter Zumthor's experiments in space", *The Independent,* June 6, 2011, accessed June 25, 2013, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/architecture/peter-zumthors-experiments-in-space-2293428.html.

"In architecture, there are two basic possibilities of spatial composition: the closed architectural body which isolates space within itself, and the open body which embraces an area of space that is connected with the endless continuum.[…]

I do not claim to know what space really is. The longer I think about it, the more mysterious it becomes. About one thing, however, I am sure: when we, as architects, are concerned with space, we are concerned with but a tiny part of the infinity that surrounds the earth, and yet each and every building marks a unique place in this infinity. […]

Buildings that have a strong impact always convey an intense feeling of their spatial quality. They embrace the mysterious void called space in a special way and make it vibrate."[80]

Zumthor's space is basic. It is a space of exclusion, a selfish space which has no room for action, being instead dedicated to contemplation – an architecture which was not meant to be seen, but was meant to be felt, to be lived. Zumthor's architecture works with definite cuts. His space is not ambiguous, fluid or bivalent; on the contrary, it is hermetical. It is not only determined, it is isolated, as well – cut out of its context, separated from the everyday, constructing its own, private universe.

Hortus conclusus – Zumthor's proposal for the 2011 Pavilion – is an example of this particular kind of contemplative space, which cuts out a surface of the greenery, practically proposing a garden inside a garden. Still, the two spaces are amazingly different. Thus, the park remains a public space, a space for activities, an extroverted space, while the Pavilion is a metaphor of a primordial nature, of a conceptual nature, achieving a cultural level. The garden is a tamed nature, which becomes a sanctuary, a magical place to which one relates to on the intimate level of fragility – a contemplation place, which is alive.

"A garden is the most intimate landscape ensemble I know of. It is close to us. There we cultivate the plants we need. A garden requires care and protection. And so we encircle it, we defend it and fend for it. We give it shelter. The garden turns into a *place*."[81] (italics added)

The Pavilion is a black box, an enclosed space which is charged by the emotional intensities emanated by its visitors – a collection of daily pensive fragments. The Pavilion is also literally a black box, cutting out its own space, which is clearly thrown into relief by the colourful, organic lines of the vegetation. Even the transitional space between interior and exterior – the width of the volume surrounding the garden – becomes the darkness of shadows which forewarns, which prepares the visitor for something else – for a place. The only compromise the Pavilion accepts, in relation to its context, is the fact that the access is not restricted to a single entrance, it actually offers several perforations at the end of various footpaths winding among the trees – the only curves the building has to offer.

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[80] Peter Zumthor, *Thinking Architecture,* trans. Maureen Oberli-Turner (Basel, Boston MA, Berlin: Birkhäuser, 1999), 21.

[81] Serpentine Gallery, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2011 by Peter Zumthor", *Serpentine Gallery*, accessed June 25, 2013, http://www.serpentinegallery.org/2011/04/serpentine_gallery _pavillion_2011_zumthor.html.

"I'm looking for architecture space, and architecture space, as we know, is a void. It's a mysterious void, and we can only influence it. We can shape this void, and we can influence it through its materiality. It's like membranes that you can stretch and pull. So that's what I want – I want to control it … that's not the right word … I want to design something that doesn't exist. It doesn't exist, so I have to do it."[82]

Zumthor's architecture, consisting mainly of isolated objects, which are self-centred, introverted and unrelated to their context, creates a space unclearly situated between architecture and land art. It is a space which produces a sensorial architectural experience. It is an architectural cloister, which works with light, shadows and textures – a place which is able to live in itself and through itself, being self-sufficient from a perceptual point of view.

"To me, buildings can have a beautiful silence that I associate with attributes such as composure, self-evidence, durability, presence, and integrity, and with warmth and sensuousness as well; a building that is being itself, being a building, not representing anything, just being."[83]

Zumthor gives birth to architecture in a purely intuitively manner, a result of the places he carries in his mind as feelings, experiences, space fragments, qualities, bits of artworks, films, literature and even someone else's architecture.

Herzog & de Meuron and Ai Weiwei • 2012 Pavilion

The 2012 Pavilion[84] was probably the most controversial project. The critics were more or less acid, characterising it with different epithets raging from installation to anti-architecture. However, if one were to follow the discussions which took place during over a decade of collaboration between Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron and Ai Weiwei, one could sense the germs of the idea behind this pavilion in several ways, including in some of Weiwei's previous projects – as Herzog remarks.[85]

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[82] Serpentine Gallery, "Peter Zumthor in Conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist and Julia Peyton-Jones", *Serpentine Gallery*, accessed June 25, 2013, http://www.serpentinegallery.org/ Final%20PZ%20interview%2015%20Feb%202012.pdf.

[83] Zumthor, *Thinking Architecture,* 32.

[84] Cf. Steve Rose, "Herzog & de Meuron: and now for our next trick…", *The Guardian,* May 23 2012, accessed June 28, 2013, http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2012/may/23/ herzog-de-meuron-next-trick; Jay Merrick, "Memories of the far pavilions: A sneak preview of this year's offbeat addition to Hyde Park", *The Independent,* May 26, 2012, accessed June 28, 2013, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/memories-of-the-far-pavilions-a-sneak-preview-of-this-years-offbeat-addition-to-hyde-park-7785735.html; Elias Redstone, "London Underground / Digging the Serpentine Pavilion", *T Magazine,* May 31, 2012, accessed June 28, 2013, http://tmagazine.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/05/31/london-underground-digging-the-serpentine-pavilion/?_r=0; Jonathan Glancey, "Herzog & de Meuron and Ai Weiwei's Serpentine Pavilion review", *The Telegraph,* May 31, 2012, accessed June 28, 2013, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/architecture/9303222/Herzog-and-de-Meuron-and-Ai-Weiweis-Serpentine-Pavilion-review.html.

[85] Ai Weiwei, Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron, Hans U. Obrist, Julia Peyton-Jones, and Joseph Rykwert, "A conversation – Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron and Ai Weiwei with Julia Peyton-Jones and Hans Ulrich Obrist" in *Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2012*, ed. Sophie

Herzog and de Meuron state that their architecture is permanently trying to experiment, no matter what the building type might be – stadium or pavilion – it is always searching to rethink the building type, its significance. Probably this is the main feature of their architecture: re-composing, asking radical questions, opposing repetition. Following this reasoning, the 2012 Pavilion, instead of proposing a new object, chose rather to focus on what has been instead of what might be. Thus, the idea of archaeology emerged, of designing a palimpsest of all previous pavilions.

From a spatial point of view, this approach raises a series of issues. First, there is a new type of relationship established in the linear history of the pavilion, a relationship established between real space and recalled space. From a perceptual point of view, there is a superposition between real and virtual. Practically, the physical space is cut out by a memory or a chain of memories belonging to that particular place. Past spaces are revived, re-born through their (mental) traces. Of course that this entire process is an imagined or imaginary archaeology – if one were to overlook the volume of relocated earth filling up the voids left behind by the foundations of the previous pavilions – a rather conceptual archaeology, which is able, however, to give birth to a totally original space, a layered space, a heterotopia, even.

> "This idea about the archaeology of past Serpentine Pavilions comes down to the fact that architecture is a total effort, as a history and as a human structure. We tried to make something very essential, very visceral; we wanted to put ourselves in a position where we could have a conversation with other people's efforts and to make a very clean and understandable gesture out of this."[86]

The space of the Pavilion does not go back in time only from a conceptual point of view. The Pavilion is physically placed underneath the Serpentine lawn, precisely because it wants to establish a relationship on a sensorial level with the previous pavilions. This relationship is emphasised by the fact that all surfaces are covered in cork. The use of cork facilitates the establishment of a tactile and olfactory dialogue with the visitors, by simulating the texture of dug out earth. Thus, the Pavilion produces probably the most sensorial space so far. From a perceptual point of view, not only does the 2012 proposal explore a conceptual space – the presence of a past state, which is now rather more absent than present –, but it explores a profoundly sensorial one, as well – visual, tactile, olfactory.

> "All of these traces of former Pavilions will now be revealed and reconstructed. The former foundations and footprints form a jumble of convoluted lines, like a sewing pattern. A distinctive landscape emerges that is unlike anything we could have invented; its form and shape is actually a serendipitous gift. The plastic reality of this landscape is astonishing and it is also the perfect place to sit, stand, lie down or just look and be awed. In other words, it is the ideal environment for continuing to do what visitors have been doing in the

O'Brien, Melissa Larner, Claire Feeley, London: Koenig Books and Serpentine Gallery, 2012 [page missing]; *apud* Herzog & de Meuron, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2012 - Conversation" *Herzog & de Meuron*, accessed June 28, 2013, http://www.herzogdemeuron.com/ index/projects/complete-works/376-400/400-serpentine-gallery-pavilion/FOCUS/conversation.html.
[86] Weiwei, Herzog, de Meuron, Obrist, Peyton-Jones, and Rykwert, "A conversation"; *apud* Herzog & de Meuron, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2012 – Conversation".

Serpentine Gallery Pavilions over the past eleven years. The pavilion's interior is clad in cork – a natural material with great haptic and olfactory qualities and the versatility to be carved, cut, shaped and formed.

On the foundations of each single Pavilion, we extrude a new structure (supports, walls, slices) as load-bearing elements for the roof of our Pavilion – eleven supports all told, plus our own column, which we place at will, like a wild card. The roof resembles that of an archaeological site. It floats a few feet above the grass of the park, so that everyone visiting can see the water on its surface reflecting the infinitely varied, atmospheric skies of London."[87]

Thus, space becomes a dug out time capsule, opened to the public, proposing an approach which simply refuses to be part of the past twelve years' clearly drawn trajectory. Although many have been disappointed by Herzog, de Meuron and Weiwei's design, the Pavilion still fulfils its purpose, namely setting the pavilion, as a building type, in a new conceptual perspective – thus truly becoming a Thirdspace, putting it in Soja's terms.

Sou Fujimoto • 2013 Pavilion

For Sou Fujimoto space has no historical connotation. His architecture has no historical link and has no intention of becoming part of history. Fujimoto's references are much more abstract, elementary. For him space is either a nest, or a cave.[88] Both are primary architectural forms, but, for Fujimoto, they are antithetical. On the one hand, the nest – or the created space – is in essence an organised, functional environment, dedicated, adjusted to the needs of the user – either human or animal in nature. The cave, on the other hand, has an autonomous existence; it does not depend on a necessity. As Fujimoto remarks, the cave is the result of a natural process, independent of convenience, independent of its inhabitants. In the case of the cave, the dweller is the one who has to assimilate the space, to assume it by adapting it. The dweller is the one who has to decide in what manner each surface or each area may be used. Fujimoto concludes that a cave is not functional, however it is heuristic – this type of space is precisely the one in which Fujimoto believes in, the one he considers to be the future of architecture.

Fujimoto's space is an adaptation and an update of a profound Japanese way of living. Japanese space is rather contemplative, it can adapt to nature, it can pulsate beside it, and it can be diffuse, developed gradually between interior and exterior. In this sense, the epithet of being primitive, suits Fujimoto rather well. The architect's point of view manages to include all these qualities in an almost mathematically contracted formula. Fujimoto's space is reduced to a maximum, to the most primitive and elementary dimensions and relationships which can be established with a space.

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[87] Serpentine Gallery, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2012 designed by Herzog & de Meuron and Ai Weiwei", *Serpentine Gallery,* accessed June 28, 2013, http://www.serpentinegallery.org/ pavilion2012/pavilion/.
[88] Sou Fujimoto, "Primitive Future", *El Croquis* 151 (2012): 198–213.

"I have a sense that we need to really push the boundary and go one step further so that the process ceases to be a mere stacking of house forms. By doing that, I think a different and novel reality can emerge. Even as far as transcending the symbolic. At the same time, by stacking 'forcefully', I have a feeling that our conventions can be erased and enabled interact with spaces and conditions in a child-like manner. So I do not think that the ultimate goal is to just stack the house forms, but to generate architectural discoveries at various levels."[89]

Fujimoto's spatial experience oscillates between an intimate link with nature – a link he established growing up in an area of sparse population in Hokkaido – and a gradual link between private and public space – the urban space of Tokyo where the transition from his six tatami room to the public space was gradual, through a succession of spaces: the stairwell, the blind alley on which the house was situated, the alley, the street, the boulevard. The space of Tokyo has been reduced, in Fujimoto's opinion, to a range of intensities which vary between room, house and city.[90]

Fujimoto's architecture can be described as being a gradual space transposed in a technological era. His architecture possesses, on the one hand, an almost mathematical rigidity, given by its three-dimensional grid, which he uses so often, and, on the other, it grows organically, almost chaotically, pulsating in wider or narrower spaces – spaces which are to be assigned to different postures, different necessities, different functions. Practically Fujimoto creates anthropogenic caves.

The 2013 Serpentine Pavilion is precisely such a combination of a three-dimensional grid – the "hard," abstract, mathematical core – and the final soft, organic shape – the cloud. Although from a distance it seems to be rather a sculpture, up close, the pavilion proves itself to be conceived precisely as a cave. It is a volume made of a network of metallic bars – impenetrable, but at the same time transparent – thus being dissimulated in the landscape. It is a man-made type of geometrical rigidity, which is trying to interpret the natural process of generating shapes – shapes which are soft, organic, and playful.

The volume becomes almost immaterial, being difficult to comprehend where the interior ends and where the exterior begins. The created space has the quality of being over or under, to the left or to the right, narrow or wide, while being interior or exterior proves to be less important. The space created by Fujimoto raises no questions regarding the issues of interiority or exteriority; it rather experiments with the laws of gravity and with the subtle perception of the limit. Visiting the pavilion, climbing up to different niches, at different levels, stepping on transparent glass surfaces, one ends up floating somewhere among the vegetation in the fine and diffuse network of a white cloud.

"For the 2013 Pavilion I propose an architectural landscape: a transparent terrain that encourages people to interact with and explore the site in diverse ways. Within the pastoral context of Kensington Gardens, I envisage the vivid greenery of the surrounding plant life woven together with a constructed geometry. A new form of environment will be created, where the natural and the man-made merge; not solely architectural, nor solely natural, but a unique meeting of the two. […]

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[89] Ryue Nishizawa, "Conversation between Ryue Nishizawa and Sou Fujimoto", *El Croquis* 115 (2010): 5–19, 9.
[90] Nishizawa, "Conversation between Ryue Nishizawa and Sou Fujimoto", 10.

The delicate quality of the structure, enhanced by its semi-transparency, will create a geometric, cloud-like form, as if it were mist rising from the undulations of the park. From certain vantage points, the Pavilion will appear to merge with the classical structure of the Serpentine Gallery, with visitors suspended in space."[91]

Fujimoto's assumed goal is not to design buildings, but to create spaces, thus taking a journey back to the origins, as he puts it, to the essence of the relationship between space and man – "an architectural garden" which lacks walls, flat surfaces, even colours![92] Fujimoto is trying to create spaces which can become a different kind of background, a background which allows people to behave differently from the everyday.[93]

The Serpentine Pavilion is actually part of a long series of spatial experiments – experiments which joggle shapes, materials and playfulness. From a perceptual point of view, Fujimoto's space is probably the most interesting one yet, because it succeeded in identifying and cultivating a type of spatial relationship which precedes architecture, it even precedes building altogether. His experiments produce different perceptions, a different way of structuring space, somehow more elementary, but which succeeds in producing places of an incredible sensibility.

His space is the result of technology; however it manages to remain primitive, elementary. It is a manmade, geometrical, rigours space, a grid-like space, which functions, however, according to organic and, in the end, natural principles, gradually linking the interior with the exterior, making its limits, level of intimacy and functions adaptable.

Experimenting between space and place

The Serpentine experiment proves itself to be not just an experiment of artistic expression, a manifestation of the architectural will, but also a crucible of spatial tests. The ephemeral condition which defines pavilion architecture allows a much more permissive conceptual process. The pavilion can be seen as a 1:1 scale model of the theories regarding the space-place relationship. In addition, based on the last 14 years' experience of Serpentine Pavilions, space can be cut out, enclosed, compressed or diluted in various ways. However, the most important conclusion which can be drawn is related to the quality of the space.

From a perceptual point of view, the space enclosed by the successive pavilions designed on Serpentine Gallery's lawn, cannot be categorised by a single definition. Even though at the beginning two major categories were identified – the ones focusing on an image and the ones that experiment with space itself, not only with its envelope –

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[91] Serpentine Gallery, "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2013 designed by Sou Fujimoto", Serpentine Gallery, accessed June 30, 2013, http://www.serpentinegallery.org/2013/02/sou_fujimoto_to_design_serpentine_gallery_pavilion_2013.html.

[92] Rowan Moore, "Sou Fujimoto and building with nature", *The Guardian*, May 25, 2013, accessed June 30, 2013, http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2013/may/25/sou-fujimoto-serpentine-pavilion-interview.

[93] Oliver Wainwright, "Serpentine Gallery becomes Serpen-Torn with radical new pavilion", *The Guardian*, June 4, 2013, accessed June 30, 2013, http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2013/jun/04/serpentine-gallery-pavilion-sou-fujimoto.

at the end of this journey throughout 14 years of pavilions, the conclusions seem to require a far more refined categorisation. Although there are many examples in which the pavilions succeed in creating a place out of the space they cut out, the places themselves are quite varied. Thus, the place oscillates between the perfectly opaque enclosure proposed by Zumthor through his hortus conclusus and the airy proposals by Fujimoto or SANAA. The place is centrifugal in the case of Libeskind or Gehry, and centripetal in the case of Herzog & de Meuron, Elíasson or Ito. Zumthor, Fujimoto or SANAA's is a place of contemplation, while Nouvel, Elíasson or Herzog & de Meuron's is one of action – a place seen as a process, as Massey states.

Even when analysed from the point of view of spatial representation, some of the pavilions are effective in proposing an innovative, experimental manner of approaching spatial relationships, relationships with space and of understanding space. Thus, new ways of defragmenting spatial compositions emerge, only to recompose it into mental structures. The pavilion created by Herzog & de Meuron, for example, is a space of successive superpositions of a physical place upon a series of remembered spaces in an incredible inclusive manner – just like Soja's theory. Zumthor's Pavilion, on the other hand, proposes a transcendental space, which can rather be found inside oneself than in physical space, probably being remembered as a sensation and not necessarily as a series of images. Zumthor materialises a place according to an incredibly phenomenological interpretation of the concept. Elíasson's Pavilion, just as Fujimoto's or Ito's succeed in integrating dynamism, movement into their architecture, namely the ability of giving the illusion that space transforms itself at the same pace at which the point of observation moves – in fact embodiments of Lefebvre's thesis, according to which space is generated through the movement of the body. Such a space cannot be transposed into a single structure; it probably can be rendered only as a network of relative relationships established among different parts of the building.

The Serpentine phenomenon, because it uses the same site each year, can be compared almost to the conditions of a laboratory of spatial experiments. From a perceptual point of view this factor is especially important because, using basically the same starting point, 13 different results emerged, managing not to have anything in common, each of them proposing a unique way of understanding, composing and creating space, and, in many cases, even a place.

Last but not least, one has to appreciate the last years' tendency of not offering just an image, an architecture designed just for the sake of its envelope, but also for the wish to create a space, and moreover, to create a spatial experience. The main quality of these experiments is the fact that they succeed in assimilating, interpreting – and even in diversifying – almost all theoretical constructs of the concept of place. Architecture – in the context of the Serpentine lawn – proves to be the ideal tool to materialise and translate several incredibly diversified discussions, which sprung around the space-place relationship.