



# TEMP WORK

Words by DAVID SOKOL

*Temporary Architecture Now!* opens with an existential bang. Quoting an ashes-to-ashes musing penned by no less than Marcus Aurelius, author Philip Jodidio wonders aloud, "Aren't all buildings temporary things?" In this eighth installment of Taschen's *Architecture Now!* series, Jodidio features works that have limited runs. More important, these art installations, fair pavilions, event venues, public amenities and concert backdrops' short shelf lives are self-admitted. They demand that architectural achievement be measured in innovation as much as generation.



Here, from top: **PHILIPPE RAHM'S** *White Geology* at the Grand Palais, Paris, 2009; **NASA'S** International Space Station, 1998. Opposite: **ZAHA HADID'S** *Egypt: Mother of the World*, the Egyptian Pavilion at Expo 2010, Shanghai.

gravitas—in particular a tendency to contemplate their own temporariness. Some, like *Bubble*, celebrate it. This inflatable event space conceived by Diller Scofidio + Renfro is meant to squeeze within the circular inner courtyard of the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D.C. It oozes beyond the boundaries of the Gordon Bunshaft landmark, too, forcing a new perspective of the places we inhabit: Perhaps other buildings could transmogrify if given the chance. Installed in fall and spring to accommodate as many as 800 people, the pneumatic structure burns quickly and bright.

*Cloud Cities* also basks in temporariness, as well as the theme of surpassing ordinary limitations. Staged by Tomás Saraceno at the Atelier Calder in Saché, France, these bubbles float above ground as so-called habitable platforms that can merge and reconfigure. More poetically, the Frankfurt-based artist comments that the spheres are supposed to transcend politics and culture by literally traveling above state boundaries.

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Another example of self-reflexively fleeting architecture is the Spanish Pavilion at Expo 2010 in Shanghai. Its mere existence reinforces the notion of statehood. Yet to make the pavilion, Barcelona-based architecture studio Miralles Tagliabue appended diaphanous wicker panels to a rippling steel frame that remains visible through the woven fiber. The unusual material choice may celebrate a Spanish craft that has lasted centuries, but the still visible structure equals brevity. Olafur Eliasson's *Mikroskop* also employs structure quite conspicuously. Scaffolding cradles a giant folded shape, inside of which walls of mirror foil reflect the glass ceiling of the Martin-Gropius-Bau exhibition hall. The effect is kaleidoscopic; the acclaimed artist pairs temporary installation with a feeling of infinity. It's like occupying a wormhole.

Asked to create a building from recycled stone for the 2010 Salone Internazionale del Mobile, John Pawson tried a similar tack of point/counterpoint. The London-based architect placed the House of Stone inside a double-arcaded courtyard at the Università degli Studi; the little structure features no other material than its namesake, as well as a coin-slot incision that betrays the thickness of its walls. The effect is of a chapel ruin, not an installation that's here today and gone tomorrow.

such as the BIG-designed Danish Pavilion for the Expo, have it both ways. To passersby this giant loop corkscrew may appear flimsily temporary. In reality is fabricated of endless steel trusses, so strong that ensconces the famous *Little Mermaid* sculpture, on loan from the Copenhagen harbor. Although the Hans Christian Andersen character is the official star of the pavilion, it is a confounding, memorable event merit visit the falling-over spiral.

Parallels can be drawn between the Danish Pavilion and Nomiya, the cover of *Temporary Architecture Now!* and a favorite of Jodidio himself. The traveling restaurant is the work of French multimodal artist Laurent Grasso and his architect brother Pascal. Mounted atop the Palais de Tokyo in Paris in spring 2009, Nomiya provided dramatic views of another architectural spectacle that was originally intended for stay in the City of Light—the Eiffel Tower—seemingly indestructible jewel box comprising a crisp glass volume with a scrim hiding the working kitchen. On the other hand, the building was constructed in two parts off the armature on which it rests is so laid out that the restaurant looks like it could swivel and dive off the Palais de Tokyo roof at any moment. Gastronomy is but an excuse to occupy a high perch. These are among many delicious projects to consider, and in light of Jodidio's numerous smart selections, it's not a surprise to hear him explain that the *Architecture Now!* series is responsible for educating a generation of architects and prospective clients alike.

Indeed, subjects like architect and product designer Mark Fisher offer tangible lessons to readers. Londoner's description of the materials and fabrication behind U2's 360° world concert tour is refreshingly detailed and makes his famous stagecraft seem almost replicable. Other *Temporary Architecture Now!* takeaways are plentiful for deducing. For example, even in this relatively young field, certain fixations predominate. Just as multiple architects put their unique spin on inflatable structures, do others gravitate toward reclaimed shipping containers or affordable housing, or a combination of the two. These topics could make for the focus of books of their own. And they have.

Jodidio is clearly capable of fleshing out these trends and other nascent phenomena, and his central assertion is still a powerful one: Contemporary architecture doesn't necessarily have to aspire to eternal-flame status. Instead, it can damn the conservatism of posterity. It can launch a thousand meditations.

*Opposite, clockwise from top left: ESSENTIA'S Imperfetto, Bologna, Italy, 2010; OLAFUR ELIASSON'S Mikroskop, Berlin, 2010; ADAM KALKIN'S Illy Push Button House, 2007; TOMÁS SARACENO'S Cloud Cities/Air-Port-City, 2010; MARK FISHER'S set for U2's 360 Degree world tour, 2009; MASSIMILIANO and DORIANA FUKSAS' set design for Media and Oedipus at Colonus, Syracuse, Italy, 2009.*