ARTCITY PEEPSHOW PAVILION
DESIGN COMPETITION

Calgary, Alberta

Submission Deadline
September 1, 2004

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# Exchange Pavilion:
Redefining Pavilion and Public Art

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The city of Calgary's Artcity Peepshow pavilion competition called for an expression of art which would utilize and investigate the potential within the city's infrastructure. Our design response was the 'Exchange Pavilion' which is driven by the festival's theme, 'currency'. Our view on 'currency' was not only seen as the state of being current, but extended to include the act of exchange and circulation. Strategically designed and placed on the pedestrian street, its intent is to enhance the conversation between the artist and the local public, bringing the current opinion of the public to be relayed to the artist. The pavilion becomes a device to create the circulation of ideas from the artist to the public and vise versa.
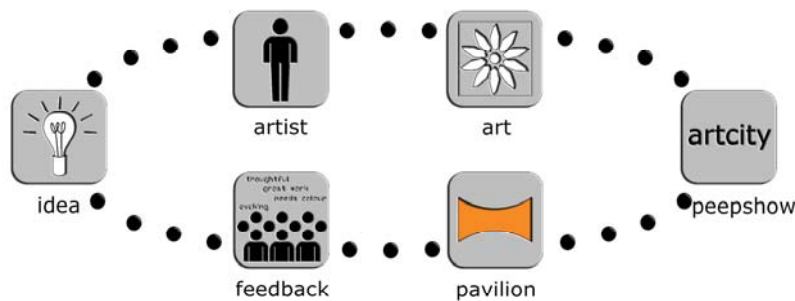

The Artcity Peepshow competition is a unique entity among the classification of building types. As it combines the ideas of traditional galleries, non-traditional galleries and public art, the built form falls into the unclear term of pavilion. Furthermore, as this proposal works at a smaller, more intimate scale, it further separates itself from examples of the larger museum or gallery. Likewise the research and precedents of such are just as indistinct and unique. Throughout the conception and design of the Peepshow competition three categories of precedents emerged, those which are similar in essence and conception, those which relate in size and material and lastly those which embodied the exchange. Together these models lead to the fruition of the 'Exchange Pavilion'.

First off, the world pavilions seen at the Venice Biennale and World Expos work well as examples in the early stages of conception and design. Although these buildings work at larger scales than what the competition was calling for, they open the door to ideas of interaction and display. Similar to the competition, these buildings were designed to have a character of their own while still being able to contain and display something, which may or may not be connected to the overall form and function. Furthermore, in the case of the Venice Biennale this unrelated content could be changed annually as the pavilion acts as a shell, housing the different works over the years. The Biennale provides a wide variety of pavilions, some whose emphasis lay in the pavilion itself while others are geared towards display as a black box, and yet others combined both pavilion and display space to offer a yearly fusion of artist and architecture. In addition to documentation, I've recently experienced the 2003 Venice Biennale, and was able to reflect on first hand memories and experiences to explore the concept of 'pavilion'. Two examples which continually came to mind are the Iceland pavilion display and the Korea pavilion, both found in the Giardini di Castello of the Biennale. The exhibit at the Iceland pavilion demonstrated an excellent yet simple interactive display. Upon entering a small space the viewer was confronted with a wall of pull-out panels, yet little identification was present other than a name on the spine of each. Intriguingly inviting, the viewer begins to pull open these panels. As this is done a large image is reviled on the side of the panel, while a corresponding sound is played throughout the room. Suitably lit from an above skylight, the intrigue and reward of the interactive display offers parallels

venice biennale

display sketch
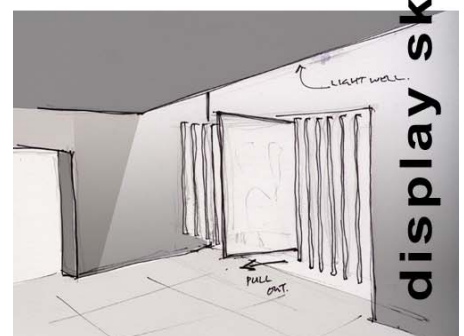
with the development of the Artcity proposal; as we too were dealing with making the display become interactive. The Korean pavilion, which has more recently been built, has paid much more attention to the pavilion architecture using flashier forms and materials. Although this leaves the display area less flexible, the architecture becomes part of the displayed art. While this pavilion presents a stimulating idea of pavilion it also shows blending between pavilion and art, which was a key factor during the development and conception of the Peepshow pavilion. The Korean pavilion had dealt with the balance between architecture and art during its conception and was successful in accomplishing both, which ultimately is the goal of our design. In addition to the Biennale experience, I also reflected on my early experiences of pavilions at Expo 86 in Vancouver. Although I was at a young age, it was easy to remember the unique and awesome built forms at the Expo, as the many buildings presented new ideas about architecture. Upon further investigation the many Expos over the years have produced many of the world's first in architectural design. From the very first Crystal Palace to the towering Eiffel Tower and Seattle Space Needle, the Barcelona pavilion as well as most recently the Hungarian Pavilion in Hanover, Germany. The World Fairs provide a venue that invites many unique designs; where designers dabble with new or different forms and construct types, in turn stimulating the designs of tomorrow. Although our pavilion design may not push the envelope at the same degree as the pavilions of the world expos, it is in a similar spirit that we use unique and unconventional means to accomplish our design. By examining previous attempts at interactive pavilions and experimental designs, one can see how the development of
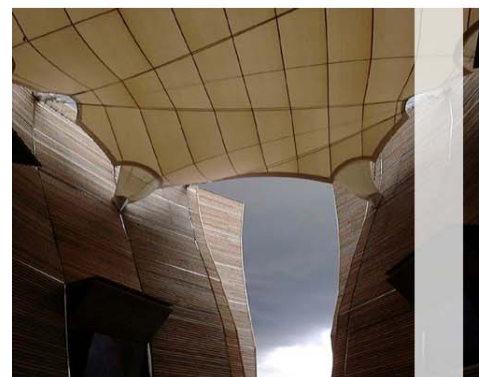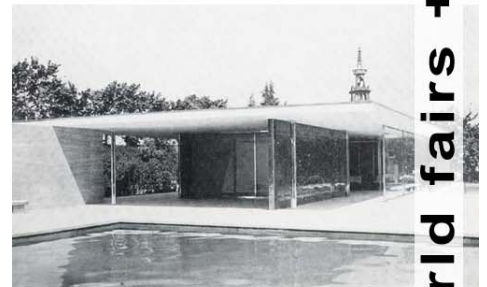
the Peepshow pavilion relates in spirit and theory to those of the Venice Biennale and World Expos.

The second set of examples, which relate in size, can be proven to be analogies to the construction and form of the Artcity pavilion. Examining things like simple containers, commercial storefronts, mall kiosks and simple shelters one can draw similar schemes of construction and material. These simple architectural models unknowingly deal with the pragmatic requirements of the competition, such as size restrictions, structure, and weather and vandalism protection. As the Artcity pavilion is a self contained entity, one could argue it is simply a container. Likewise, as a result of the portability of the pavilion it begins to parallel a container like typology. Like a transport shipping container our pavilion must provide a rigid form to allow for the transportation of itself each year while it is placed along the urban street and then back into storage. Although there is little resemblance in our final product, transport shipping containers and other ideas of container are models which correspond to our background structural strategy. Next, as the pavilion requires objects on display in a protected manner, one can quickly see the equivalent to a glazed storefront. A lot can be taken form the model of the storefront, similarly they share the same relationship between viewer and object, they both protect the viewed object and often many storefronts contain signage or other literature which explain the contents inside. Even the event of window shopping is a partial analogy to our desired use of the Peepshow pavilion. Expanding the search and incorporating the overall size of the pavilion leads to the mall kiosk. The mall kiosk presents both a means of display like

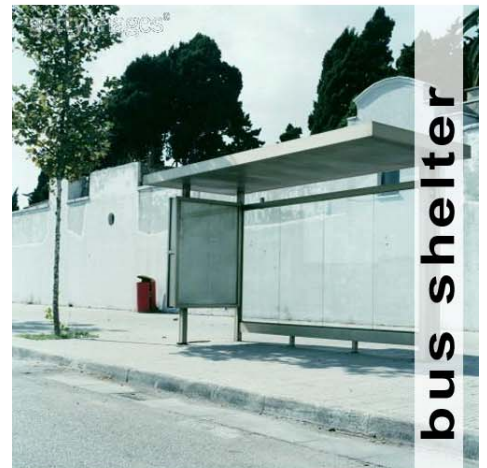container

store front
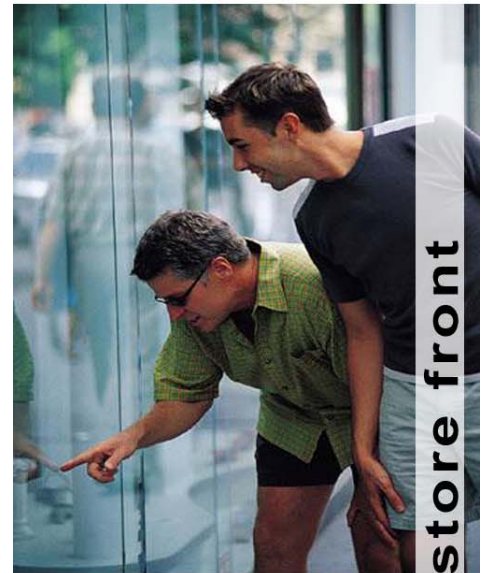
mall kiosk

the idea of the storefront, but it further relates to the pavilion typology. Similarly to the Peepshow pavilion, a mall kiosk needs to be accessible from all sides, space for display, and compact and contained. Perhaps the mall kiosk is the most relevant example to the Artcity Peepshow pavilion, as it not only shares a similar function and size but is usually accomplished by simplified means, which works well in addressing the competition budget. Lastly, ideas about simple shelters come to mind when looking at our pavilion's need to work against rain and wind.   The pavilion is similar to a bus shelter, or even a tent as it does not provide a conditioned space, but it is able to screen the rain and wind. It is in the act of dealing with the elements than the pavilion takes on the role of shelter and therefore has a lot in common with this typology. The congruencies to our pavilion seem to be all around us, even if they're not always pure forms of architecture, these other examples present previous design solutions used for similar pragmatic aspects of the competition.

mall kiosk

bus shelter

Lastly, the pavilion does not come into full fruition without the influence of the public's means for express and communication. One of the well documented forms of public expression, whether legal or not, is the urban expression of graffiti. Perhaps the legitimate vandalism, graffiti provides individuals the means of public exposure and communication within society. Additionally, graffiti becomes directly related with architecture as it is most commonly seen on built forms, such as walls, stone fences, concrete bridges and overpasses. One of the most important acts of graffiti in the twentieth century was the works on the Berlin Wall. Used by Berlin's citizens, it became a notepad for expressing their

tent

frustrations and sorrows caused by their governments. All along the wall these articulations took the form of protest writings, imagery and murals. As for our design pavilion, the graffiti wall is materialized in the transparent curved viewing surfaces on either of the long sides of the pavilion. These walls have two roles; first they embrace the viewer as the wall dips towards the displayed art, and secondly, this surface is intended to act as a notepad to write feedback, suggested by the embedded writing utensils perpendicular to the writing surface. Ultimately we've deliberately turned the pavilion into an opportunity for graffiti, which is asking the public to produce a critical commentary on the displayed art, from anyone and everyone.

graffiti

berlin wall

Our Artcity Peepshow proposal associates with an array of models; architectural pavilions, small kiosks and containers, even graffiti. Not confining ourselves to any direct similar typology, our design solution straddles many concepts and past experiences. In the end, it was the small scale of the design that diverted it from the conventional image of pavilion, and lead to the comparison of limited precedents. Corresponding to similar conceptions, as that in the world pavilions of the Venice Biennale and World Expos, and employing simple design characteristics of mall kiosks and bus shelters, the resultant was a unique solution. By continuing the design to include social development into its function it further produced an interactive device to address the competition. Whether it comes from past experiences or what you've seen in a book, eventually the past finds a place in your future!

pavilion

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