



# MPAVILION 2014 BY SEAN GODSELL

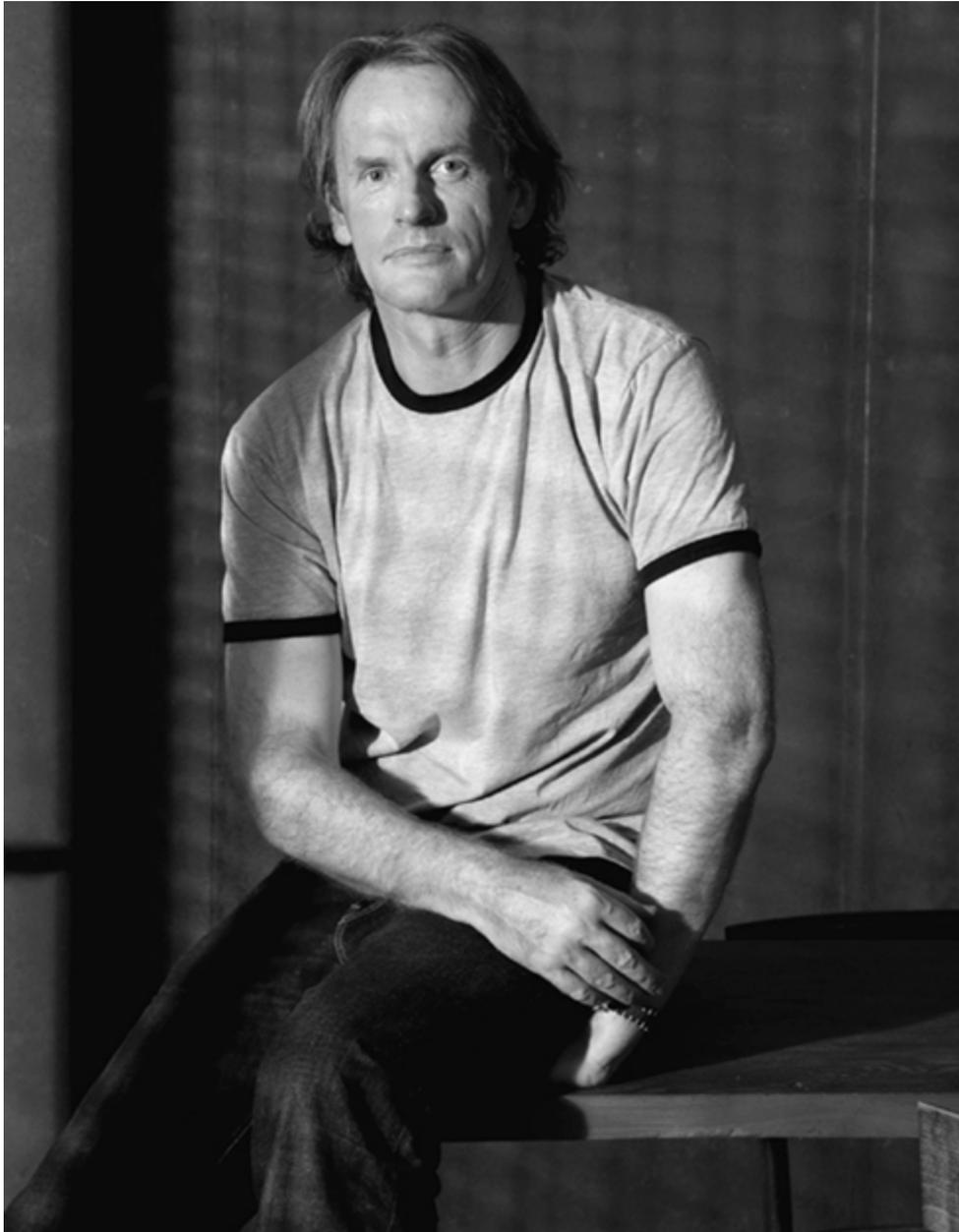
## EDUCATION GUIDE

MPavilion is an annual initiative of the Naomi Milgrom Foundation that, since 2014, has brought leading architects from Australia and around the world to Melbourne to design a temporary pavilion for the Queen Victoria Gardens. Each MPavilion hosts a diverse program of free talks, performances, workshops and educational activities and is open daily during its season.

The ambition of MPavilion is to make architecture accessible as a field of design that is of central importance to the way we each experience the world. The architects invited to design each MPavilion are chosen because they are outstanding in their field and unique in their approach to architectural design. This selection criteria has resulted in each new MPavilion being very different from the last in form, materials and building technologies used. At the close of the season each MPavilion is relocated to a new home. You can visit previous MPavilions at locations across Victoria. You can visit the 2014 MPavilion by Sean Godsell at the Hellenic Museum in Melbourne.

### How to use this resource

This resource introduces the MPavilion initiative and focuses upon the 2014 edition by Australian architect Sean Godsell. It is aimed at students in levels/years 3-10 and its content is aligned with Victorian and Australian curriculum descriptors. It is intended as a source of insight for educators to draw upon for use either in the classroom, or to help structure an excursion to MPavilion. Each MPavilion has its own dedicated resource and it is recommended that students visit more than one MPavilion to appreciate the contrasts between the designs of different years.



## About the architect: Sean Godsell

Sean Godsell is a world-renowned Australian architect who was born and raised in Beaumaris, Melbourne. Godsell graduated from his undergraduate architecture degree at The University of Melbourne and completed postgraduate studies at RMIT University. From 1986-88 Godsell lived in London and worked at the architecture firm Lasdun, Softley and Partners. After returning to Melbourne Godsell established his own practice, Godsell Associates Pty Ltd Architects, in 1994.

Godsell's ethos (his guiding belief or principle) is to be uncompromising in his architecture. For example, Godsell declines to include ornamentation or decoration in his designs. Instead, he favours raw, exposed materials and clean lines, which lend his buildings a quality of blunt honesty. This ideological conviction means that his designs, in combination with the materials that he uses, can result in buildings that appear tough, bold or austere.

Godsell has taught extensively as a university lecturer in the USA, UK, China, Japan, India, France, Italy and New Zealand, as well as across Australia. Godsell's work has received multiple awards including the Premier's Design Award and the RAIA Robin Boyd Award, and his designs have been exhibited internationally, with the prototype for the RMIT Design Hub façade now included in the permanent collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, in London. In 2015 Godsell's MPavilion won a Small Project Architecture award from the Australian Institute of Architects.

Portrait of Sean Godsell  
(Image by Earl Carter)

## What is architecture?

Put simply, architecture is the art and practice of designing buildings. A person who practices architecture is called an architect, and to become qualified they must have studied architecture at university. The field of architecture is diverse, including very practical buildings, like hospitals, and also highly creative and expressive ones, like art galleries. And very often, the best architectural buildings combine both practicality and creativity together.

## What is a pavilion?

Generally, pavilions are defined by their use as venues for enjoyment or pleasure-related activities such as art exhibitions, music concerts, or as shelters at sporting events. Ordinarily, people don't live or work permanently in a pavilion, and this is reflected in their designs - you are unlikely to ever find amenities such as a kitchen or bedroom in a pavilion. Because pavilions do not need to be functional for day-to-day work or habitation (living), they offer architects unique opportunities to take creative risks and to test experimental designs.

You might already have encountered some examples of pavilions in day-to-day life. For instance, a bandstand in a park, a gazebo in a garden, or a grandstand at a football oval are all different types of modern pavilion. The word 'pavilion' is thought to have developed from two words, the Latin word *papilo*, meaning tent, and the French word *papillon*, meaning butterfly. This is because very early examples of pavilions were large tents with extended fabric sections that were reminiscent of the spread wings of a butterfly. Some of the earliest known pavilions built from permanent materials were Chinese and date back millennia - to 1046-256 BCE!

**Exploration opportunity:** Investigate these historical and contemporary examples of pavilion design from around the world. What do they have in common with Sean Godsell's MPavilion?

- Serpentine Pavilion
- Brighton Pavilion
- Taoran Pavilion
- Royal Pavilion at Schloss Sanssouci

## Key design: 2014 Sean Godsell MPavilion

Featuring butterfly-like adjustable wall and roof panels, numerous internal columns, and reclaimed timber floor, Sean Godsell's MPavilion is probably unlike any building you have seen before. However, its unique design actually results from the combination of two well-known and highly contrasting architectural inspirations.

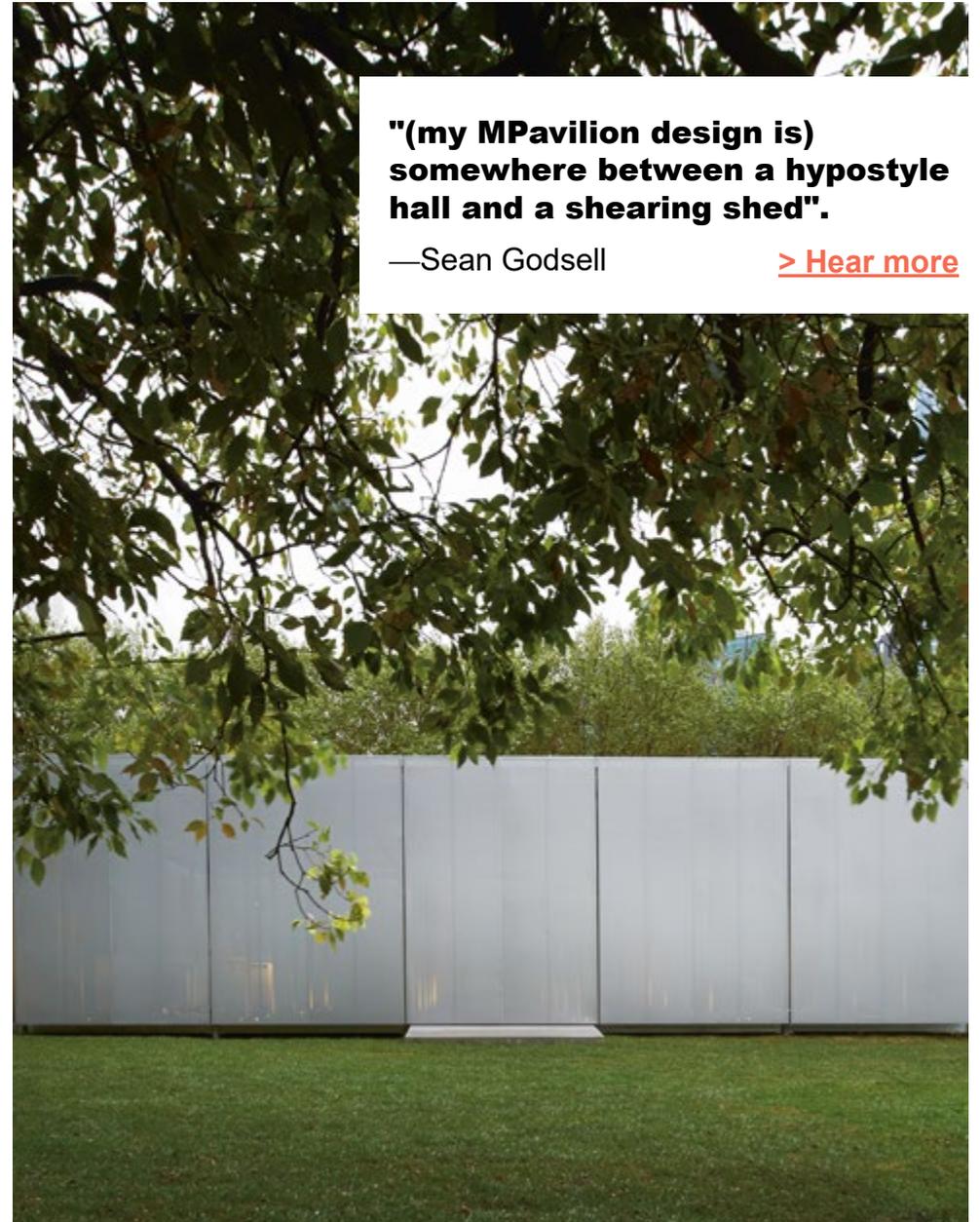
Godsell's first inspiration was the Great Hypostyle Hall, an ancient building located in the Karnak Temple complex in Luxor, Egypt, dating to c. 1290-1224 BCE. The Great Hypostyle Hall is one of the earliest known examples of a building that uses many columns to support its roof rather than arches and walls. It is so significant a design precedent that the term 'hypostyle' was coined to describe any building that uses columns in a similar way. Because Godsell's MPavilion uses many columns (36 in total) to support its roof, it can be described as a hypostyle building. As the walls don't need to be load-bearing (meaning able to support the building's weight), this design allowed Godsell to create articulated (hinged) walls that can be automatically raised or lowered to create either an open, airy space, or a protective enclosure.

The second more modest, but equally important, inspiration is the corrugated iron Australian shearing shed commonly found throughout regional and outback Australia, the earliest known example of which dates to 1859, and is located in Jondaryan, Queensland. For Godsell, the utilitarian (meaning designed to be useful rather than decorative) nature of the shearing shed is emblematic (meaning symbolic or representative) of Australia and its architecture. Shearing sheds are defined by their economic materials, lightweight construction, large open internal spaces, and lack of ornamentation. Godsell appreciates those qualities in architecture, and if you look closely you can observe all of them in his MPavilion. The floor of the MPavilion is even made from wood reclaimed from a demolished agricultural shed in regional Victoria.

**"(my MPavilion design is) somewhere between a hypostyle hall and a shearing shed".**

—Sean Godsell

[> Hear more](#)



**"I thought that the first pavilion should be quintessentially Australian. I thought it should have the language of our country."**

—Naomi Milgrom AC

[> Listen to the interview](#)

Because the 2014 MPavilion was the first in the series, it was important that its design made a strong impression to 'set the scene' for the initiative. MPavilion's commissioner, Naomi Milgrom, wanted the inaugural design to reflect the Australian context and culture.

Milgrom had followed Sean Godsell's architectural practice for several years, and invited him to design the first MPavilion because she saw that his architecture thoughtfully engaged with the Australian landscape, environments and histories.

Godsell is inspired by how qualities of the Australian climate, such as its harsh sun, make shelter a necessity. This is what he means by 'shelter is everything'. For him, the crucial need for shelter makes creating buildings for Australia both a consequential and creative activity. Godsell also appreciates the natural environment, and many of his buildings deliberately blur the boundary between inside and outside. Godsell's MPavilion follows this interest to its furthest extreme. When all the panels open, like a flower, at eight a.m. each day the building becomes completely open to the elements. If, however, the weather is bad the panels can lower to create an enclosed shelter. In this sense, Godsell's MPavilion is site-specific, ideally designed to transform responsively to Melbourne's infamously erratic weather.



Image by Earl Carter

**" ..(I think ) it's important that we don't lose touch with the bush and the outback and the desert, because that is Australia. (...) there's something about our country that is deeply embedded in our DNA (...) that sense of remoteness and an ancient land, a pockmarked and corrugated land within which any constructed intervention has a potency beyond itself. Shelter is everything in this country.."**

—Sean Godsell

[> Hear Sean Godsell and Naomi Milgrom in conversation](#)



Image from 'One Night Stand - Slow Art Collective'

### Fascinating facts:

- Sean Godsell's childhood home in Beaumaris, Melbourne was designed by his father, David Godsell, who was also an architect. Recently, that house was recommended for heritage classification as a significant example of mid-century architecture.
- Before deciding to pursue architecture, Sean Godsell played in the VFL for St Kilda, appearing twice and kicking two goals.

**Exploration opportunity:** Research the architectural tenet (meaning principle or belief) 'Truth to materials'.

What does it mean, and how does it relate to Sean Godsell's use of materials in his MPavilion?



Star Pavilion Soundscape (image by The Telepathy Project)

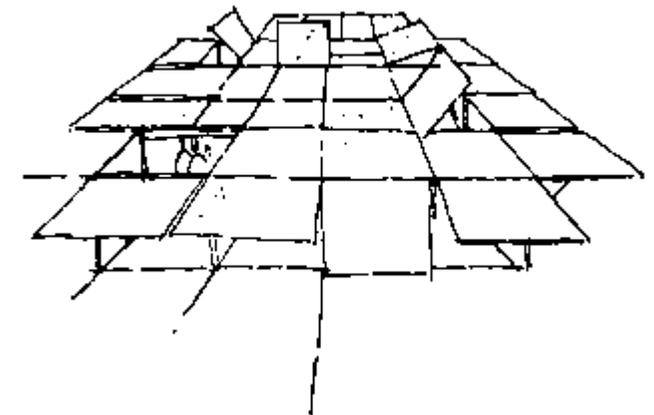
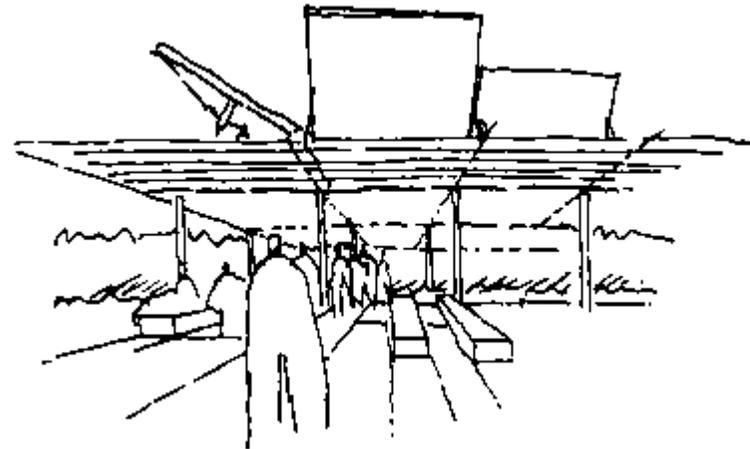
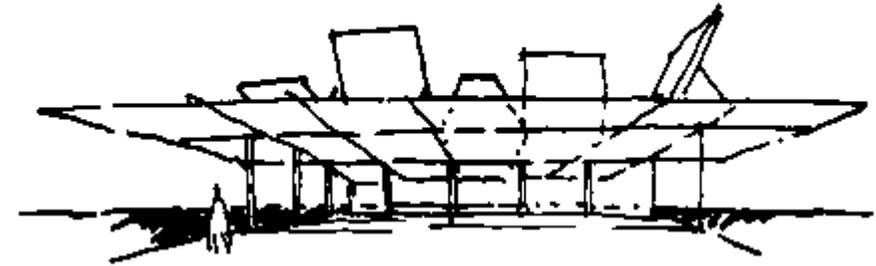
## Sean Godsell's MPavilion design process

Sean Godsell begins his design process by drawing small, rough pen and paper diagrams. These quick sketches capture the essential features of an idea for a design. Often, Godsell produces a many of these diagram drawings before hitting upon just the right expression of a idea:

You can see one of Godsell's very early sketches for MPavilion below. This was sketched quickly with a regular size marker. You can see from how thick the lines appear that the drawing is very, very small. It is the tiny seed of an idea from which the expansive, fully formed MPavilion eventually resulted.



Godsell then refined his idea in the sketches to the right. By adding detail he was able to render the important features of the idea in his head, such as the wing-like wall and roof panels, accessible to others.



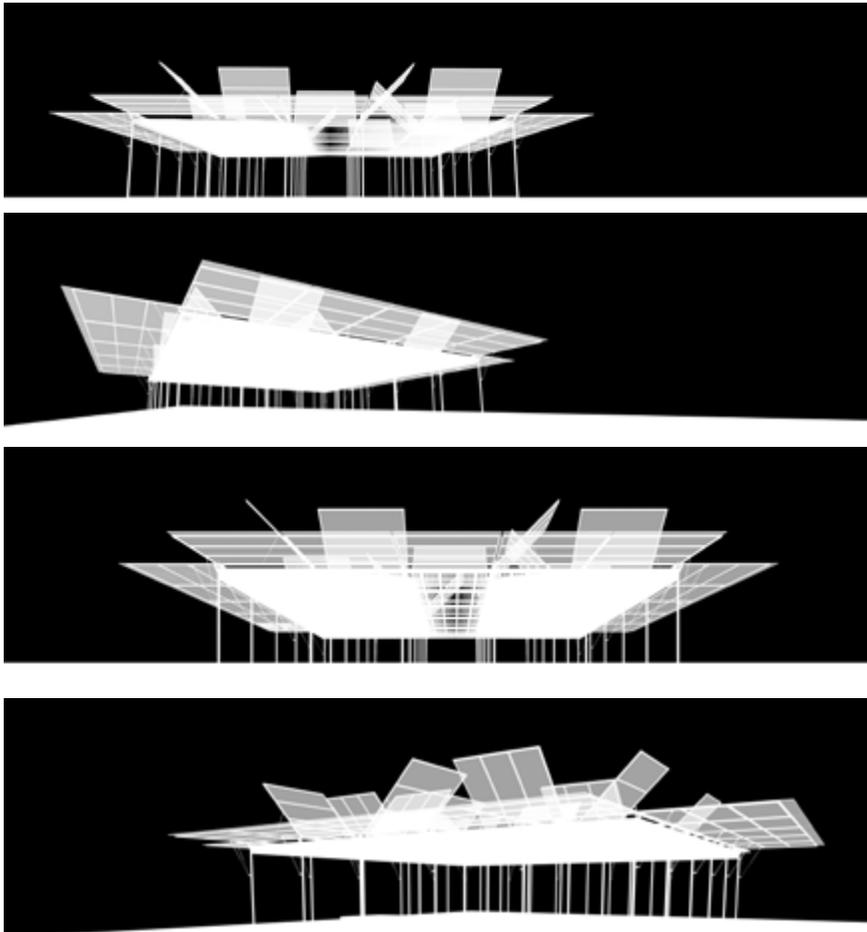
**“Once the diagram is right it becomes obvious, and usually there’s a lot of yelling and screaming and swearing to get to the right diagram, and then there’s an equal amount of yelling and screaming to say ‘why didn’t I get to this diagram straight away?’”**

—Sean Godsell

[> Hear Godsell in conversation with Leon van Schaik](#)

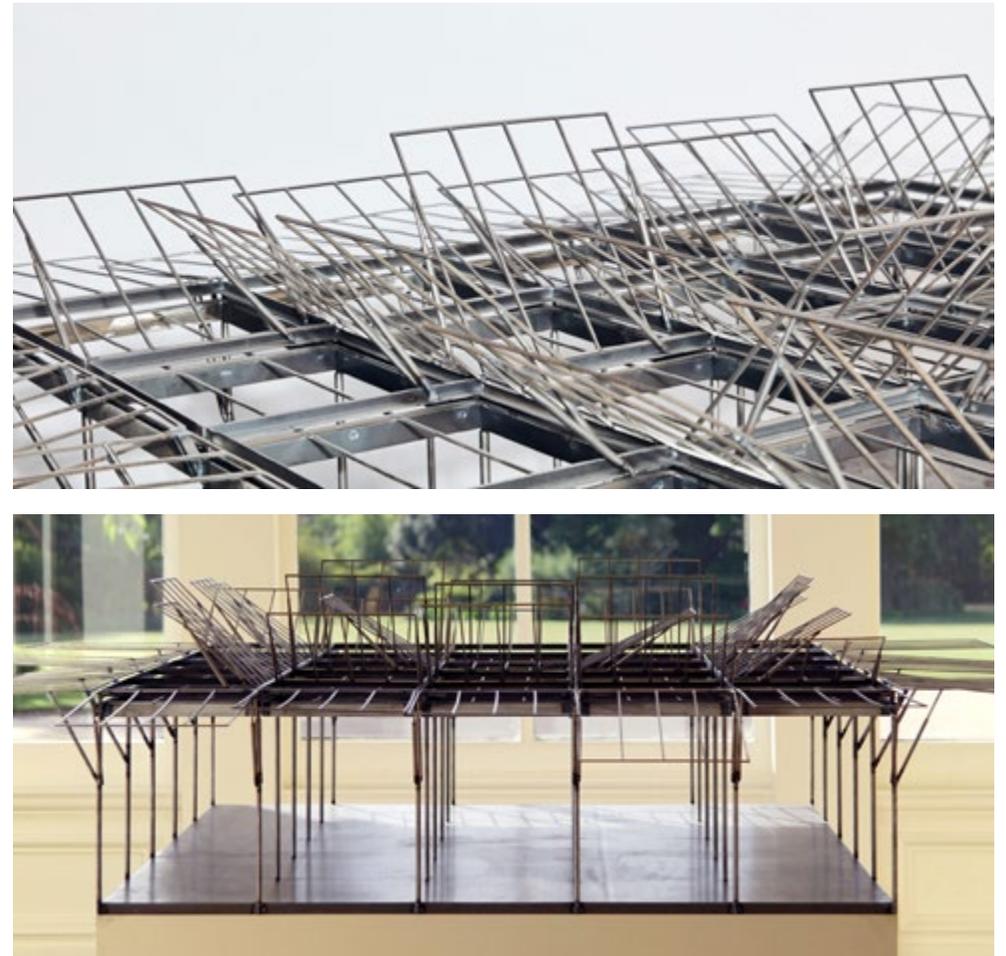
## Computer generated renders

Next, the initial sketches were translated into computer generated renders and architectural plans. The plans allowed precise measurements and proportions to be added, while the black and white renders allow the viewer to understand how the pavilion would appear in perspective.



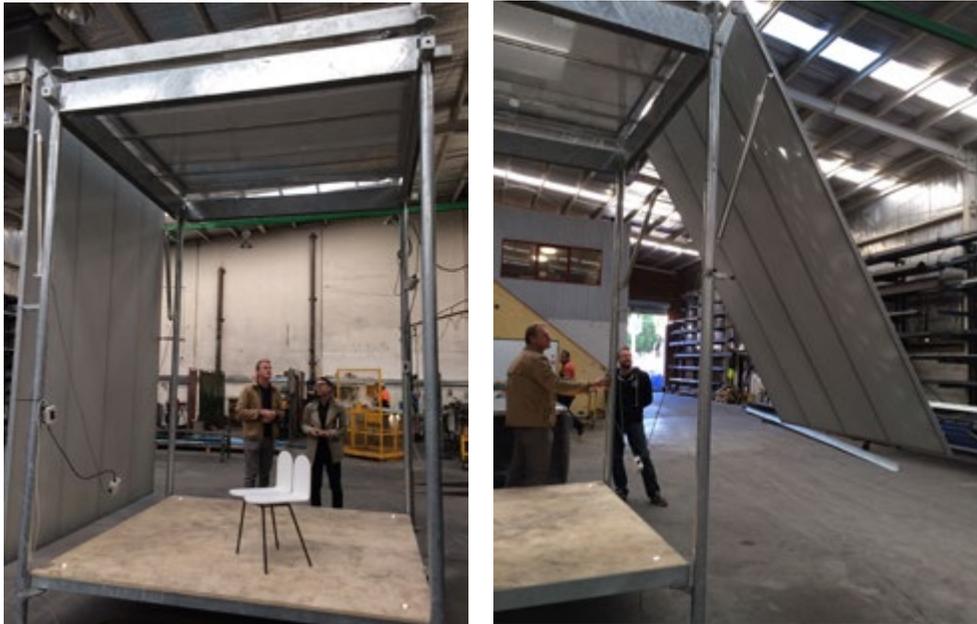
## Physical models

Because the structure of the MPavilion involves numerous movable elements, it represented a complex engineering challenge. To road test how each part would fit into the building a scale model was built from steel to assist planning for engineering and construction.



## Prototype

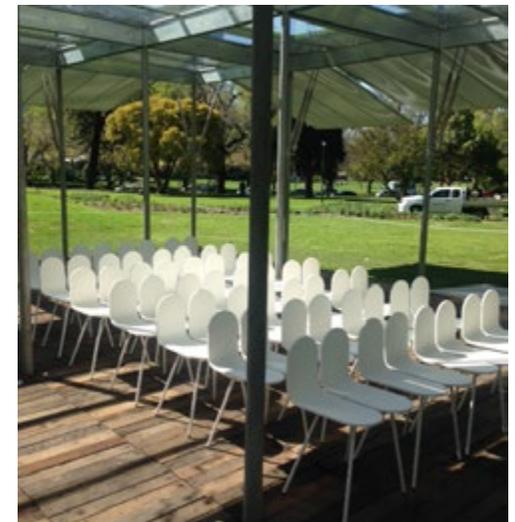
A full-scale prototype was then welded from galvanised steel to test how the automated wing panels would function. In the second image, you can see Sean Godsell testing the mechanism himself.



**Fact:** Another crucially important, but invisible, element in Godsell's design process is his relationship with his clients. For Godsell, his clients are his collaborators at every stage in the development of a design. He values risk-taking and trust in the architect-client relationship, and has said the best clients are those who '(have) a lot of steel up their spine', because, instead of interfering, they have the courage to 'allow architects to be free to do what they do best'.

## Construction

The final stage was the construction of the MPavilion. A large hoarding was erected for public safety while building works continued. Graphics were also printed to the hoarding to advertise MPavilion and create a sense of anticipation in the lead-up to launching the MPavilion. In the last image you can see a finishing touch - the white chairs that Godsell designed especially for his MPavilion.



## Relocation

At the close of each season the MPavilion is donated to a Victorian organisation, this makes space for the next MPavilion to be built the following year. Interested organisations apply to 'adopt' each MPavilion and the most appropriate site is chosen. Recipients of MPavilions include the Melbourne Zoo, Monash University and the Hellenic Museum. This strategy means that each previous MPavilion remains available to be visited, and Melbourne has gained a collection of diverse architecture by leading architects.

The 2014 MPavilion can be visited at the Hellenic Museum. This location was chosen because the Hellenic Museum celebrates Greek culture and one of the central inspirations for Sean Godsell's MPavilion was the symmetry of Classical Greek design. Note, the pavilion has been modified slightly so that some panels do not open anymore. This is due to space constrictions, and is an example of an MPavilion adapting to its new context.



Images by Simon Terrill, from the photo essay 'A Second Life'

## Inquiry questions:

1. Does the way the MPavilion's wall and roof panels open and close remind you of anything in nature?

---

---

---

2. Usually walls are there to keep the weather out. Why do you think Sean Godsell has chosen to make his MPavilion so open?

---

---

---

3. The floor of the MPavilion is made from wood recycled from an old agricultural shed. What are three important reasons for reusing this wood instead of new wood?

---

---

---

## Activity:

One of the most unique features of Sean Godsell's MPavilion is that each roof and wall panel can be raised or lowered independently using a remote control. This allows the building to transform from an enclosed space, one that is good for sheltering from the rain, to an open structure, one that allows in fresh air, sunshine and the fragrance of plants. Your task is to design your own building that has moving parts that change the experience of the building for people inside. It might help to identify an audience and then create a design that enhances their experience. For example, a building that had stairs that could convert to ramps would cater to people who use wheelchairs, making your building accessible and inclusive.

Use a pencil and paper to draw plans for your design. Add arrows, labels and short captions in colour to indicate the features of your design, especially what move and changes. When developing your design idea consider different machines, vehicles and robots. How could you adapt their features to make an exciting, transformable piece of architecture?

### Excursion tool kit:

- Greylead pencils
- Coloured pencils
- Paper or visual diary
- Hats, sunscreen and water bottles

## Inquiry questions:

1. Sean Godsell and Naomi Milgrom both describe the design of this MPavilion as displaying 'quintessentially Australian' qualities. What are some things that are typically associated with Australia? Consider nature, Indigenous cultures, art and architecture.

---

---

2. How does the 2014 MPavilion contrast fundamentally with the buildings where you go to school? Apply your understanding of those buildings to analyse the differences. Could you inhabit MPavilion like your school, why/why not?

---

---

3. Sean Godsell has said that he thinks it is important that people don't lose touch with the natural environment. Does his MPavilion embody this goal? Which of your senses are engaged by the pavilion? How does the weather affect your experience of the building?

---

---

---

## Activity:

When deciding which architect she should invite to design the first MPavilion in 2014, one of Naomi Milgrom's main criteria was that the pavilion should '...be quintessentially Australian. I thought it should have the language of our country...'. Your task is to put yourself in the role of MPavilion commissioner deciding on who the next architect should be.

Consider independently, what would the main criteria for your pavilion be? Make three-five dot points. What are your priorities - the environment, innovation, beauty? Using these dot points write a brief for your architect. It should tell them which qualities you want to see reflected in the design and why. This is to help the imagined architect best fulfil your needs.

Next, break into pairs and compare your brief to that of your partners. As a duo, interrogate each others' criteria. Consider the questions: How does the brief address environmental issues? How do the criteria reflect an audience? Are the criteria harmonious or contradictory?

Lastly, record your partners feedback as constructive criticism to use to further refine your brief.

### Excursion tool kit:

- Pens and pencils
- Loose leaf paper, digital device or visual diary
- Hats, sunscreen and water bottles

**Primary school**

**Australian curriculum links:**

Design and Technologies / Processes and Production Skills:  
([ACTDEP015](#); [ACTDEP025](#))

Generate, develop and communicate design ideas and processes for audiences using appropriate technical terms and graphical representation techniques.

**Victorian curriculum links:**

Design Technologies / Technologies and Society:  
([VCDSTS023](#); [VCDSTS033](#))

Recognise and investigate the role of people in design and technologies occupations and explore factors, including sustainability, that impact on the design of solutions to meet community needs for future use.

**Secondary school**

**Australian curriculum links:**

Critique needs or opportunities to develop design briefs and investigate and select an increasingly sophisticated range of materials, systems, components, tools and equipment to develop design ideas  
([ACTDEP048](#))

Critiquing the design of new products to identify how well design ideas respond to sustainability issues.

**Victorian curriculum links:**

Design and Technologies / Creating Designed Solutions / Evaluating:  
([VCDSCD052](#); [VCDSCD063](#))

Independently develop criteria for success to evaluate design ideas, processes and solutions and their sustainability and evaluate design ideas, processes and solutions against comprehensive criteria for success recognising the need for sustainability.

**Extension materials**

- [MRelay Part 1: Sean Godsell in conversation with Naomi Milgrom](#)
- [Time-lapse showing the automated movement of Sean Godsell's MPavilion](#)
- [Sean Godsell discusses the design and materials of his Vatican Chapel in Venice, Italy](#)

## Planning your visit

The 2014 MPavilion is located on the grounds of the Hellenic Museum, located at 280 William Street, Melbourne. For hours, admission and venue information please visit [www.hellenic.org.au](http://www.hellenic.org.au)

The MPavilion changes each year, and up until 2020 the location in the Queen Victoria Gardens remained the same. However, to account for COVID-19 restrictions, an innovative new model has been developed for 2020 that will see all the previous MPavilions used as venues for artistic commissions and events. This is instead of a new MPavilion being built. The next MPavilion in the series will be commissioned for 2021.

You can plan your visit to coincide with education-centred events for students and teachers by checking the MPavilion website: [mpavilion.org](http://mpavilion.org)

The full-to-bursting program of free events for the general public can also be accessed at [mpavilion.org/program](http://mpavilion.org/program)

## Next steps

All but one of the previous MPavilions have been relocated to new locations within Melbourne and are available for viewing, most at no cost.

**2019** MPavilion by Australian architect Glenn Murcutt can be visited at **The University of Melbourne, University Square, Carlton**

**2018** MPavilion by Spanish architect Carme Pinós is soon to be relocated, watch this space.

**2017** MPavilion by Dutch architects Rem Koolhaas and David Gianotten of OMA can be visited at **Monash University, Clayton campus.**

**2016** MPavilion by Indian architect Bijoy Jain for Studio Mumbai can be visited at the **Melbourne Zoo** (Ticketed admission).

**2015** MPavilion by British architect Amanda Levete for AL\_A can be visited at **Docklands Park.**

## Acknowledgements

This resource was written and compiled by Andrew Atchison for MPavilion, September 2020.

Terms of Use: This resource has been produced by MPavilion to provide support material for student excursions to MPavilion. The reproduction and communication of this resource is permitted for educational purposes only.