



From left: Adwoa Aboah, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Yana Peel, Michael Bloomberg and Frida Escobedo

# GRAND DESIGNS

*At the Serpentine Summer Party with Chanel, stars of art, film and fashion took a moment to enjoy the cool, airy spaces of this year's pavilion. By Harriet Quick. Photographs by Kevin Tachman*

The pavilion has been described as 'sombre', but with me being Mexican, maybe there was a misconception that it was going to be bright pink and orange," laughs Frida Escobedo, the architect of this year's Serpentine Pavilion in Hyde Park, where we meet early evening at the gallery's annual fundraising summer party. Less of a surprise is that her wardrobe is also a pink- and orange-free zone – she is dressed in an iridescent black Chanel jumpsuit. "It's cliché that architects wear black, but it's a practical matter – you don't have to think about it. I love clothes that are comfortable and do not distract. This is a moment in fashion when women are dressing for themselves, not men," she says.

appears like a beautiful sprite. At 38, Escobedo is the youngest architect ever invited to design the structure, and the first woman to take on the task since the late Zaha Hadid, in 2000. In recent years, Yana Peel, CEO of the Serpentine Galleries, and her artistic director, Hans Ulrich Obrist, together with advisors Richard Rogers and David Adjaye, turned their search to younger, relatively unknown talent and researched more than 200 practices. Obrist first came across Escobedo's work at the Lisbon Triennale in 2013, where she had created a giant circular stage. "We saw it by night – it was like a moon or an apparition on the cityscape. By day, we became aware that it was an architectural structure, a disc – it was a very generous way of creating public space," says Obrist, who subsequently invited the young architect to participate in the 89plus Americas Marathon at the >



Left: Maria Borges. Above left: Ella Purnell. Above right: Princess Eugenie of York. Below left: Kunlé Adeyemi. Below: Jenna Coleman







James Webster, left, and Alec Maxwell

Left: Ellie Bamber. Above: Edie Campbell. Right: Mimi Xu. Below: Ciara



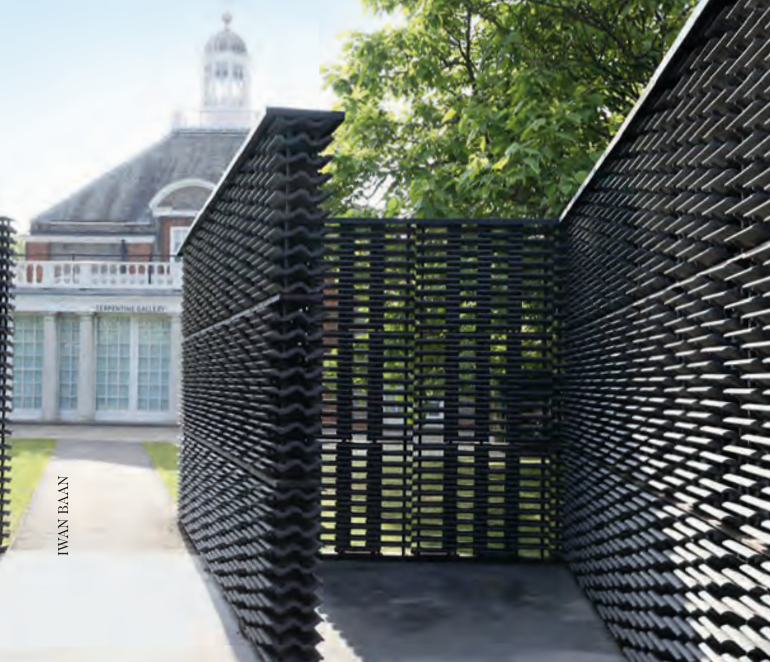
Above left: Ella Hunt. Above: Es Devlin. Below: Ellie Goulding



Above: Laura Bailey. Below: the open, lattice-like walls of the pavilion



Left: IAMDBB. Below left: Margaret Clunie. Below right: Yasmin and Amber Le Bon







Above: Lynette Yiadom-Boakye.  
Right: Alexa Chung



Anna Brewster



Left: Yinka Shonibare. Above: distorted reflections in the mirrored panels of the canopy



Akwaa Aboah

Museo Jumex in Mexico City and create a mobile structure for the event. For Escobedo, who set up her own practice in 2006, the invitation was a “What, me?” moment.

Five years later, and she’s got the main gig. “The structure is about showing off the landscape,” she says, of her pavilion (supported by Goldman Sachs). “It lets the greens and blues of the park come through and allows people to dominate. It also concerns the passage of time, as it reflects and refracts the changing light. If you go back into Mexico’s history, of course there are many colourful buildings, but there is also a story of light, texture and geometry.”

The pavilion that she has conjured up is a triumph of the quizzical, the lyrical and the practical. The exterior walls and pivoted inner panels (positioned to face the Royal Observatory in Greenwich) are made from standard British roof tiles that have been upturned and pierced with steel rods to create “breeze” walls. It’s like walking through stone basketwork. There is a shallow pool of water in one area and a shiny, reflective stainless-steel roof that flies over the structure like a wing. There are smooth and wavy textures, while the unexpected angles are conceived to make us more aware of fleeting moments and the promise of timelessness. “Texture concerns the play of light as it captures different effects, from transparency to opaque, dark to light or a linear pattern – it provides an understanding of the sun,” says

Escobedo, who cites philosopher Henri Bergson and his notion of “social time” as an influence.

Time as the metamessage and the connection to the Greenwich meridian do seduce one into contemplating our accelerated, time-starved lives, when we all speak in terms of “moments”, particularly in the world of style. Escobedo’s building seems to slow things down. Kissing, chatting, daydreaming, touching, shiny-roof gazing, learning, listening and pool paddling will all happen in this temporary space in the months to come, ending in its deconstruction in October. During this time, thousands will have visited the Serpentine, attending the Park Nights talk programme, the Radical Kitchen lunchtime seminars on food and ecology and to enjoy the Serpentine campus, taking in the Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s exhibit *The London Mastaba* – a 66ft-high construction that is floating in the lake – and the Tomma Abts show at the Sackler Wing. A record 200,000 visited Francis Kéré’s pavilion in 2017, and the numbers keep on swelling.

“The pavilion invites people to spend time and to get away from the tyranny of the clock,” says Obrist. “And it has an afterlife. It will be reconstructed in another location, and in that way it is sustainable.”

The collaborators have their own “dream spaces”: for Yana Peel, her Russian heritage leads her to the work of Soviet architect Konstantin Melnikov,





Edvard Enniful



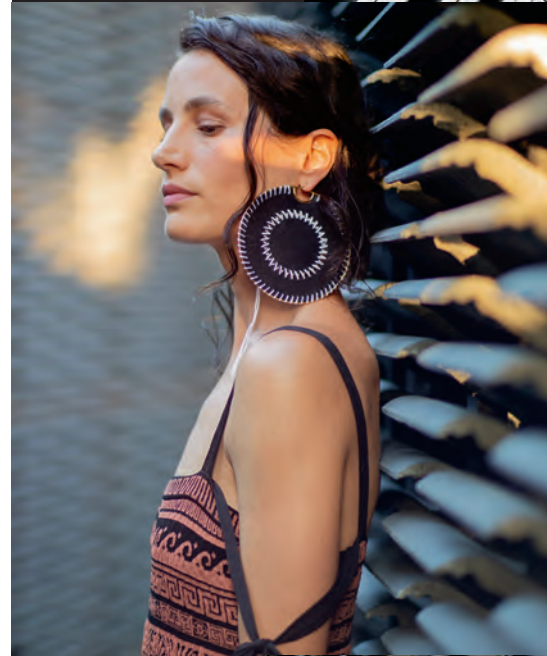
Above: Kaya Scodelario  
Right: Suki Waterhouse  
Below: Elisa Lasowski



who expressed ideas of utopia: “A lesson that great ideas need great execution,” she says; for Obrist, it is the experience of working from a floating glass house (built in 1950 and now a visitable foundation) by the philanthropic Italian-born Brazilian architect, Lina Bo Bardi, which he says “hovers above the São Paulo skyline”. While the Great Mosque of Córdoba, which encompasses Gothic, baroque, Moorish, Islamic and renaissance architecture is Escobedo’s treasured place. “So many diffuse layers of history – it’s amazing to see how culture and time can overlap without being in conflict,” she says.

Spaces to muse on, meet and take pleasure in. Historically, architecture has been a male-dominated arena with grand, eloquent structures engineered to boast power, money and stature. Today, the conversation has softened and become more nuanced. “We are moving from architecture focused on the image, to something more open and fluid. It is not just the buildings and the spectacle but about what happens around the building, and that’s also a feminine or a younger concern, and it creates more opportunities. It’s about connections,” says Escobedo, who is currently working on two hotels (a 19th-century villa in Puebla and an ecological resort in Bacalar), social housing (a big passion), and a furniture line with her small studio of eight.

Right now, a felicitous long moment at Escobedo’s Serpentine Pavilion might just be how late summer blooms. ■



Nile Rodgers.  
Below: Francis Kéré



*“Architecture is becoming more open and fluid. It’s about what happens around the building”*



Princess Beatrice of York