



# MPAVILION

**EDUCATION  
GUIDE**

## 2019 BY GLENN MURCUTT

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.

### How to use this resource

This resource introduces MPavilion and focuses upon the 2019-20 edition by Australian architect Glenn Murcutt AO. 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.



## About the architect: Glenn Murcutt

Glenn Murcutt is a world-renowned Australian architect. Murcutt was born in London in 1936 and spent his early years in Papua New Guinea and Sydney. He has been a practising architect for over five decades since graduating in 1961. Alongside running his own architectural practice, Murcutt has taught in design since 1970, during which time he has influenced generations of young Australian architects.

Glenn Murcutt's approach to architecture is holistic. This means that he considers not only the purpose of the building or its appearance, but also asks himself the questions - how will the building impact the land? Are the materials sustainable? And how can those materials be reused or adapted later? Murcutt has often referenced the Indigenous concept to 'touch the earth lightly' to help explain the philosophy that guides his design process.

Glenn Murcutt has received many awards for his architecture. In 2002 Murcutt was awarded the Pritzker Prize and this is significant because the Pritzker Prize is architecture's highest honour, and Murcutt remains the only ever Australian architect to receive it. You can think of it as being the equivalent of the Nobel Prize, only for architecture.

Portrait of Glenn Murcutt  
(Image by Anthony Browell)

## 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, 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 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.

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

## Key design: 2019 Glenn Murcutt MPavilion

Key Design: 2019-20 Glenn Murcutt MPavilion

It might surprise you to learn that Glenn Murcutt has said he began designing his MPavilion over thirty years ago - in Mexico. What Murcutt is referring to is the inspiration for his pavilion, which is a memory from early in his career of flying by light plane to visit the ancient Mayan Yaxchilán ruins. Murcutt recalls:

**“In the high humidity of the tropical climate we laid out a tablecloth on the ground, establishing ‘place’. After lunch, I put my rucksack against the aircraft’s undercarriage and laid down, and there above me was the beautiful wing, lined with aircraft fabric—which led me to the MPavilion’s roof—with the tablecloth as my place, together with my view the Yaxchilán, and the surrounding forest.”**

—Glenn Murcutt, [architect’s statement](#)

In that memory, of taking improvised shelter from the sun, Murcutt recognised all the qualities he wanted his MPavilion to feature. Like an aircraft wing, Murcutt’s pavilion takes the form of a long, white, suspended roof that offers shade but is open to the weather. It is constructed of special fabric stretched over a lightweight frame, which mimics the technology used in early aircraft wings. Murcutt has replaced the tablecloth of his memory with a concrete slab to define a place for people to gather.



Where the original aircraft wing framed a view of ancient ruins, Murcutt's MPavilion frames beautiful views of the Queen Victoria Gardens and the city. Right after deciding on his inspiration, Murcutt began by carefully surveying the features and conditions of the site:

**“Observation has been my big learning tool. To observe what the sunlight is like, where it’s coming from, where it’s going to, what angle is it at, what shadow pattern is coming, look at the trees, look at the way the light separates the elements in the landscape.”**

In his earliest drawings and plans, you can see sketched references to trees, landscape and the Yarra River. This is called site-responsive design. Rather than plonking down any old structure, Murcutt has thought deeply about the orientation (position in the landscape), elevation (height) and the perspectives (views) that the pavilion would feature. Murcutt's chief goal is to achieve harmony. Conceptually, this is just like in music - when many different voices or instruments come together to create an appealing, collective sound. Similarly, Murcutt intends his MPavilion to be attuned to the existing features of the gardens to produce a positive, harmonious experience of the location for visitors.

Glenn Murcutt's MPavilion shapes your experience of the site by creating permeable (open) relationships between the structure and the landscape. Visiting MPavilion is a multisensory experience. When inside the visitor is undercover but also able to feel the breeze on their skin, to smell the flowers in bloom, and feel the heat of the sun and the cool of the shade, allowing them to connect to the environment, climate and the architecture simultaneously. Murcutt has directed the visitor's attention by positioning his pavilion to frame features of the landscape between its upright columns, floating roof and concrete foundation. The choice to open the pavilion toward the Yarra River helps the structure to feel as if it is in a respectful conversation with the landscape, rather than intruding upon it, demonstrating Murcutt's ambition to touch the earth lightly.



Image by John Gollings

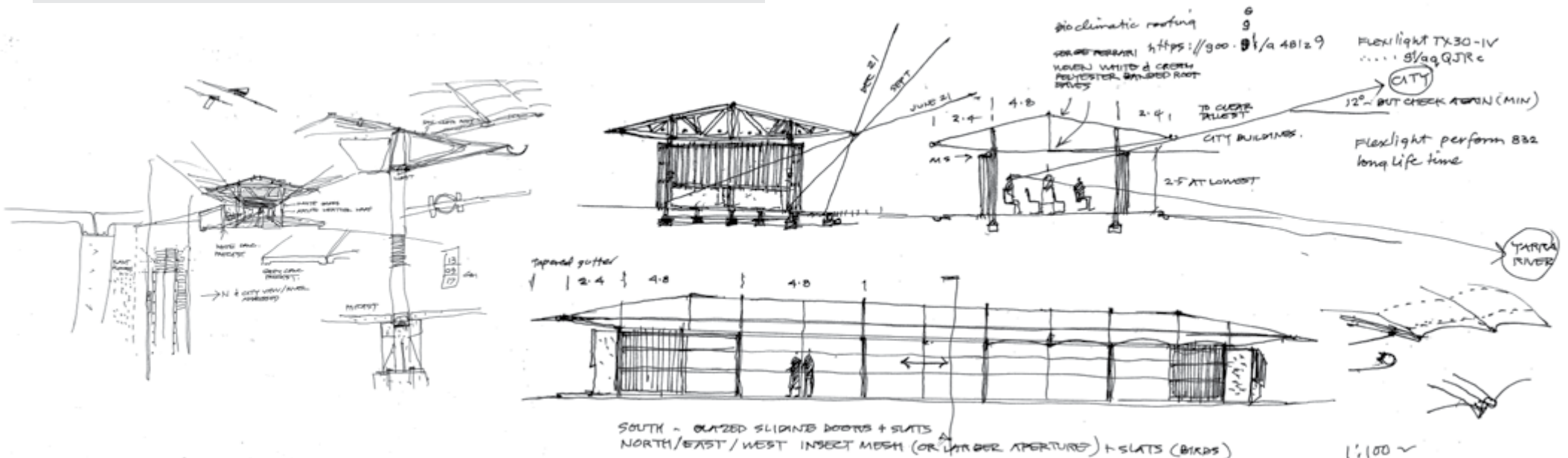
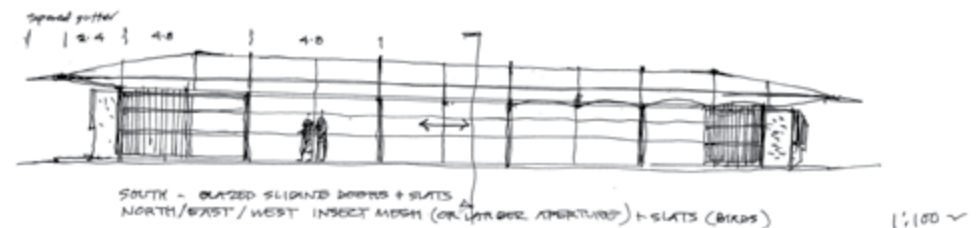
## The Glenn Murcutt 2019 MPavilion design process

Today, most architectural design work is done using computers. However, Glenn Murcutt prefers to begin his process drawing by hand because he finds it brings a unique quality to the design process that cannot be experienced through digital technology.

You can see examples of Murcutt's drawings below. Notice his attention to the position of natural features such as trees and the Yarra River.

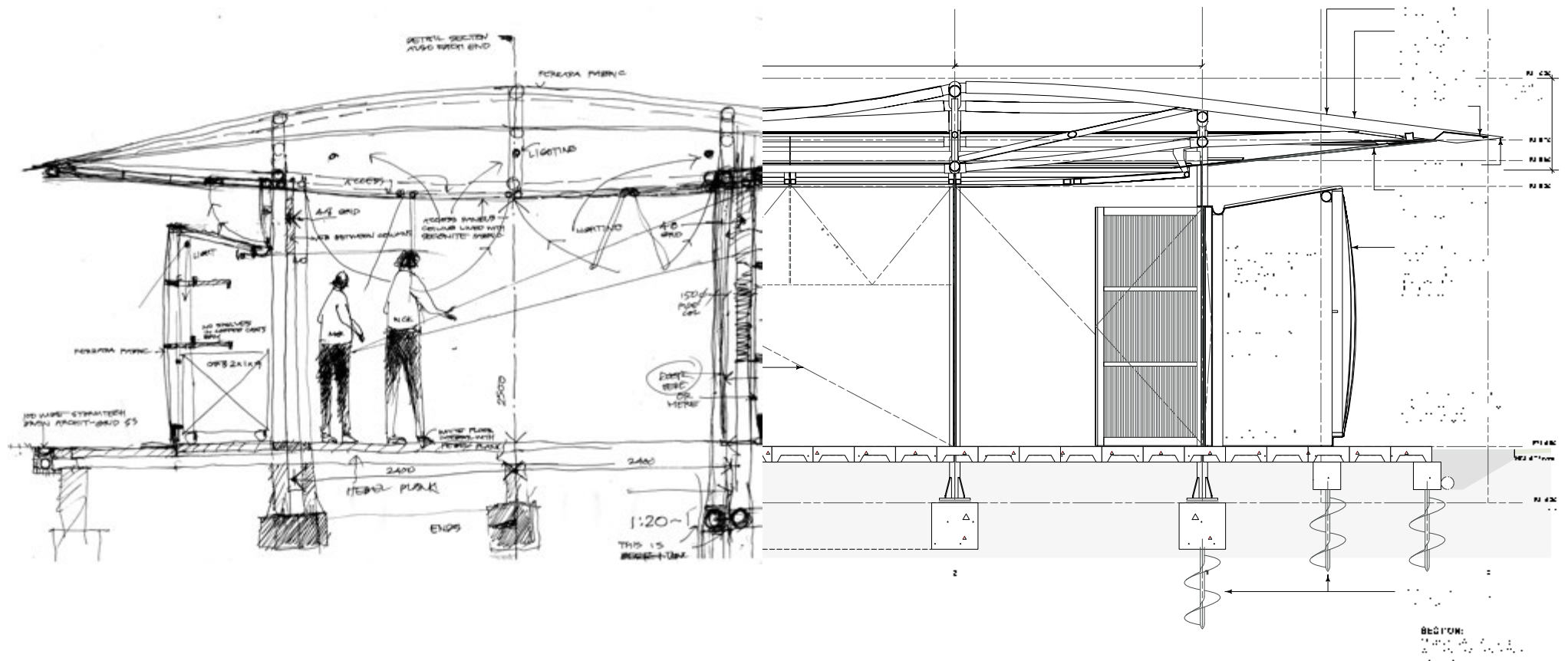
**“It’s all done through eye-hand thinking, and drawing. When I am thinking, and I am drawing by hand, I have arrived at where I was going before I’ve realised I’ve arrived. That’s not the same with a stencil or a computer, it’s entirely different.”**

—Glenn Murcutt, interview from Talking Heads [> Hear more](#)



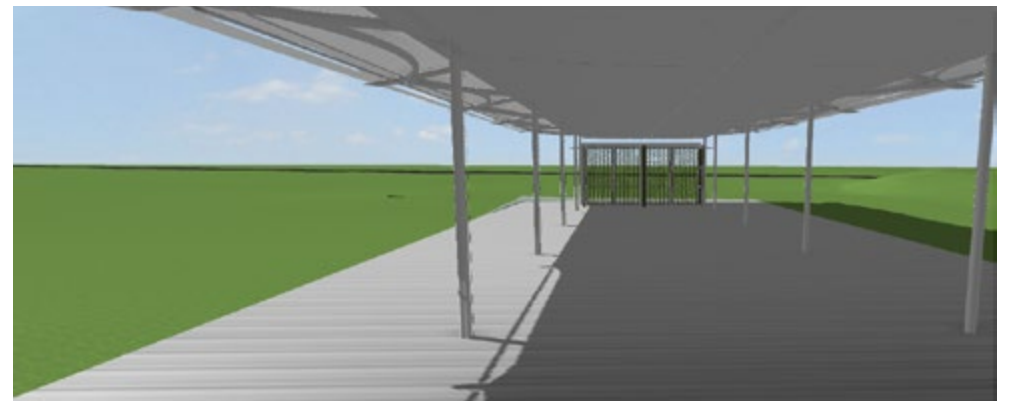
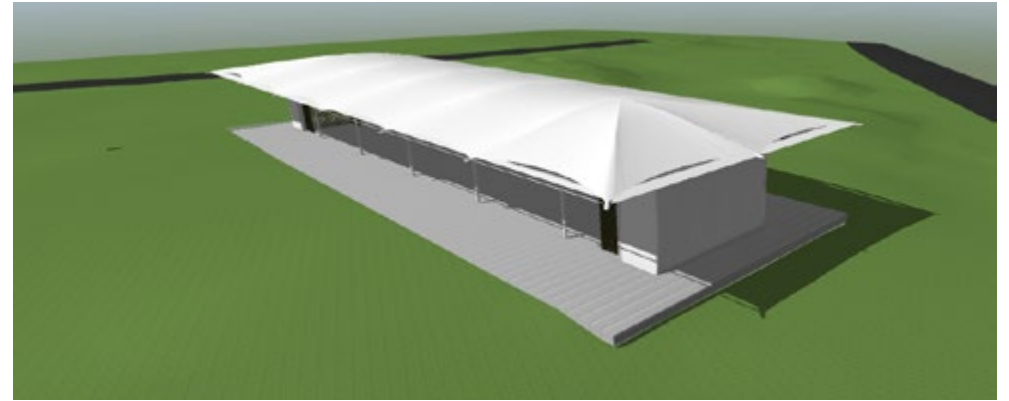
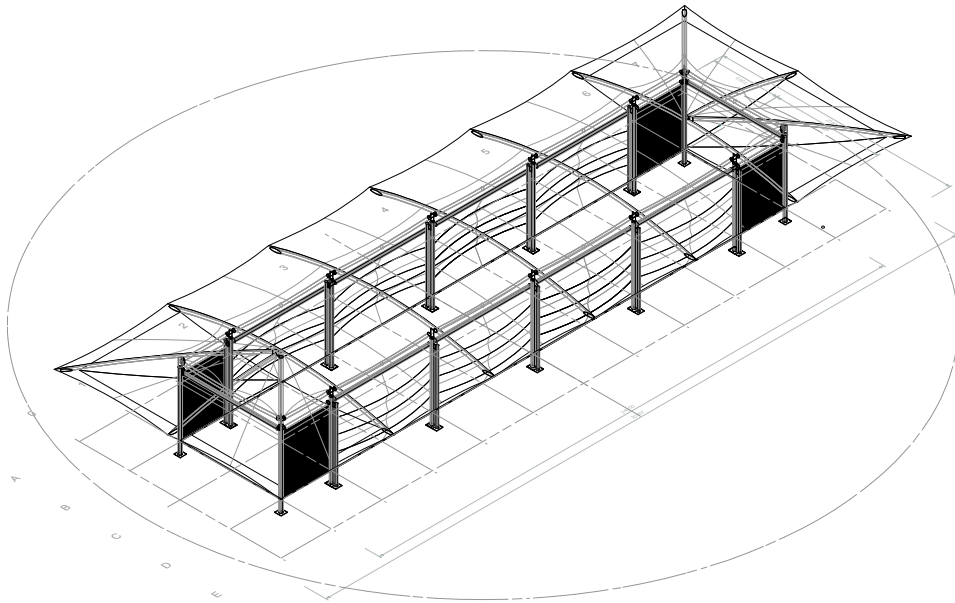
## Sketches to digital plans

These sketches were then transformed into digital plans. This was a necessary step because suppliers and builders needed exact dimensions to be able to translate Murcutt's design into a physical structure.



## Models

Finally, the plans were translated into three-dimensional digital models. This was an important step because it helped convey Murcutt's 'mental picture' into a form that others could share and understand.





## Construction

Lastly, the pavilion was installed in the Queen Victoria Gardens where it remained for five months hosting performances, talks and a café.



## Relocation

At the close of each season the current MPavilion is donated to a Victorian organisation, this is to make space for the next MPavilion. 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 visit, and Melbourne has also gained an accessible collection of diverse architecture by leading architects.

The 2019 MPavilion is being relocated to University Square, Melbourne University, Parkville. This location was chosen because the open space of the newly completed square is intended as a palace for students to gather informally. This will allow Mucutt's MPavilion to continue to host casual social meeting just as it did in the Queen Victoria Gardens.

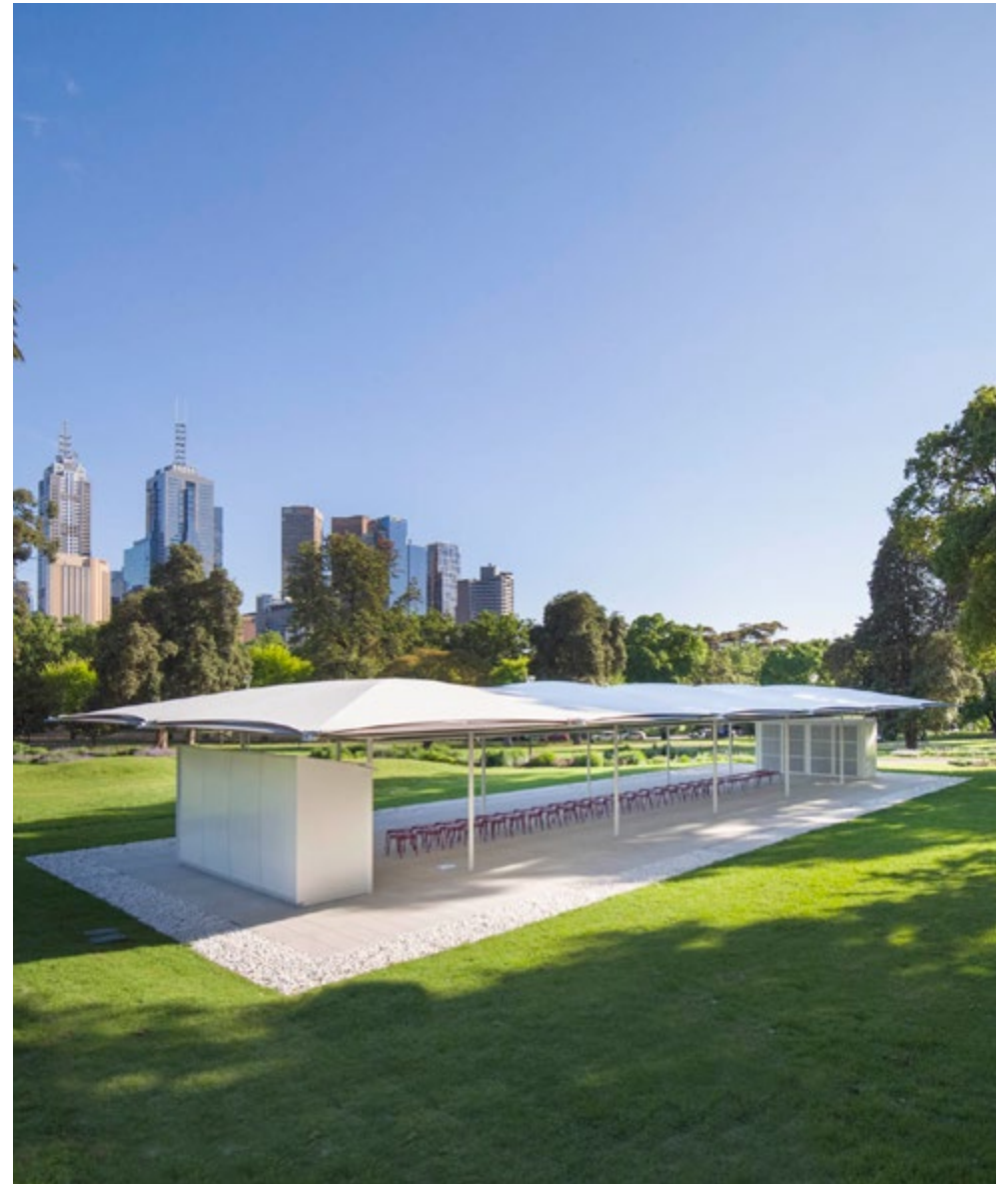


Image by John Gollings

## Inquiry questions:

1. Of what does this structure remind you? How would you describe it to a friend?

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2. Why would the architect have designed the MPavilion this way? For example, why are there no walls?!

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3. If you were the architect chosen to design the next MPavilion, how would you design it? What features would your MPavilion have, and why?

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## Activity:

A different architect is chosen each year to design MPavilion. Your task is to imagine that you have been chosen as the next architect. First, think of an idea for your pavilion design, then turn that idea into a drawing, and lastly annotate (label) your drawing to communicate its features. Remember, because a pavilion does not need to be able to be lived in, its design can be very different from a normal building. You can be highly creative - will your design have walls or a roof? Will it be multi-storey? Will it look like something else? Will it use renewable materials? As an architect, what is important to you about its design? How will people use it?

### Excursion tool kit:

- Pencils
- Paper or visual diary
- Hats, sunscreen and water bottles

## Inquiry questions:

1. Glenn Murcutt's inspiration for his MPavilion was an aeroplane wing. What relationships can you find between the MPavilion design and its inspiration?

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2. How does the MPavilion differ in materials and design from your classroom? What are the advantages and disadvantages of its design? (For instance, consider the factors weather, temperature, and sound).

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3. What is the purpose of MPavilion? Considering the events and audiences it hosts, what could be added to, removed from, or improved about the design to improve its function as a place for gathering, viewing, listening and conversation?

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## Activity:

The Naomi Milgrom Foundation commissions each architect who designs an MPavilion. It is your task to take on the role of commissioner. Firstly, you will need to develop a set of 5-8 criteria for the kind of architect you will select that address design ideas, processes and sustainability. Secondly, research three Australian and/or international architects. Apply your criteria to each to find the architect you would commission to design the next MPavilion. Finally, write one-two paragraphs that explain your choice they have met your criteria. You should think of this blurb as being for the public, to explain to them why your choice represents the best in architectural ideas, practice and environmental sustainability.

**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.

## Extension materials

- [Glenn Murcutt: Advice to young architects](#)
- [Glenn Murcutt: Introduces his MPavilion](#)
- [Glenn Murcutt: On the concept of 'touching the earth lightly'](#)

## Secondary school

### Australian curriculum links:

Design and Technologies Processes and Production Skills / Design and Technologies Knowledge and Understanding:  
([ACTDEP038](#); [ACTDEK046](#))

Independently develop criteria for success to evaluate design ideas, processes and solutions and their sustainability and investigate and make judgements on how the characteristics and properties of materials, systems, components, tools and equipment can be combined to create designed solutions.

### 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.

## Planning your visit

The 2019 MPavilion will be relocated to The University of Melbourne University Square, Carlton, in early 2021.

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.

- 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**. Admission free.
- 2014** MPavilion by Australian architect Sean Godsell can be visited at the **Hellenic Museum**.

## Acknowledgements

This resource was written and compiled by Andrew Atchison for MPavilion, September 2019.

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