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The original reconstructed 1986 Barcelona Pavilion and the reproduction of authentic user experiences

Constance Lau

The chronicles of the Barcelona Pavilion begin with the premise that there are three Pavilions to date. The 1929/30 building by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the one publicized through his manipulated photographs, and the 1986 replica based off archival material. Evidently, each Pavilion privileged different objectives with different consequences. However, the reconstruction enabled occupancy and crucially established that there is a fourth Pavilion. Hence,

Mies' didactic narrative disseminated through limited and limiting photographs inevitably succumbs to a proliferation of original images and authentic experiences. Walter Benjamin's discourse on "aura," montage and dialectics are analyzed alongside the fourth Pavilion. These individual experiences are unique to and intertwined with dialectical user-led participatory processes of reproduction in different media and modes that enhance and create "aura." These simultaneously confront, place and integrate material and chronological shifts to initiate visual and experiential interpretations of the past, present and future readings of all the Pavilions through different creative asynchronous processes. Hence authenticity is not exclusive to any one version and ephemeral polyvalent eidetic experiences are foregrounded. These are furthered as creative processes that emphasize the integrated fluidity of the exterior and interior boundaries through enhancing transitory, experiential and participatory qualities. The nonhierarchical approach celebrates the gaps and meanings shift as contingent on the work being completed by the embodied occupant. History is shaped by the vantage point of the present and expressed through the construction of tangible and intangible active sources with the critical intent to reflect creative approaches concerning occupation and use.

KEYWORDS: dialectics; creative user; Barcelona Pavilion; authorship; aura; archive; asynchronous; unfinished openness

Authorship of design and use, and another Barcelona Pavilion

The chronicles of the Barcelona Pavilion begin with the premise that there are three Pavilions to date. The 1929/30 building by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe that stood for six months, the one between 1920/30–1986 publicized through Mies' manipulated photographs, and the 1986 reconstruction that was based off these photographs, drawings and further deduced through an assortment of archival material including oral accounts by critics who have never seen the building (Hill 2001, 57–71).¹ Evidently, each of the Pavilions privileged different objectives with different consequences. This trajectory from singular to plural is first explored through authorship of design and use in architecture, and suggests that the resulting number of Pavilions would increase if the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in each of these iterations were explored separately and first measured on their own terms. More importantly, this would enable the overlooked roles of the different users in relation to the multifarious versions of the work, and idea that a work of architecture is only considered complete through participation to be foregrounded. This

facilitates discussions about intentions, as well as theoretical and material, visual and tactile encounters through occupancy from which another Pavilion emerges. Hence this fourth Pavilion is a user-dependant participatory entity that is an amalgamation of all earlier iterations and readings, articulated through different mediums and generating meanings that are in constant flux.

Mies' Pavilion was conceived for the 1929 Barcelona International Exposition and commissioned by the German Government to accommodate the official opening and reception of the German section in the exhibition. This was presided over by King Alphonso XIII of Spain along with the German authorities. The architecture was to be symbolic of Germany's conciliation after the First World War and the German Commissioner's speech at the opening ceremony presented the qualities of the building as clarity, simplicity and integrity (Solà Morales, Circi and Ramos 1993, 30). This was manifested through the deliberate lack of clearly defined thresholds, a fundamental design feature to further convey Germany's image as a modernized society that was "transparent," "crystalline" and "electric" (Quetglas 2000, 27, 123).² Here, Mies' intention through the repeated use of vertical and horizontal planes was to create a spatial continuum of material and sensory qualities that exaggerated the transitional nature afforded by the interpenetrating layers of spaces between exteriors and interiors (Tegethoff 1985, 68–69). This invalidates the expected function of the exterior as an enclosure and consequently negates the comparatively stable and predictable qualities of interior experiences. Essentially, the design challenged common assumptions, especially prior to the twentieth-century, that regards a work of architecture as a stable built-form with contrasting roles assigned to the exterior and interior. The blurring of boundaries was further enhanced by the choreography of the transparent and reflective attributes of water, polished marble, travertine surfaces, free-standing glass planes and onyx wall. The spatial composition allowed the architecture to be experienced in relational shifting increments, enabling space to function as conditions that are simultaneously comprised of theoretical, perceptual and tactile concepts. While the design of this original Pavilion is solely attributed to Mies, authorship of use to understand the architecture as a physical entity and fully appreciate the spatial qualities necessitates an embodied experience as movement through the building becomes a primary medium of architectural meaning.

However, Mies' building was dismantled soon after, in 1930, with the components allocated for different uses (Solà Morales, Circi and Ramos 1993, 21).³ Hence until its reconstruction in 1986, the Pavilion was solely communicated through a series of photographs, drawings, sketches and correspondences associated with its commission, design and construction scattered between various institutions.⁴ Moreover, Mies took to manipulating photographs of the Pavilion to put forth particular readings which may not have been

apparent in the visitor's experience of the actual building. This was especially because budget and time constraints meant that the finished Pavilion had not fully achieved the intended design aspirations. While it is not unreasonable to suggest that Mies' may not have been fully satisfied with the Exposition building due to these necessary modifications that did not align perfectly with his design intentions, he was able to regain full control in the presentation of these images because of the change in medium. Hence prior to 1986, the users of this second iteration consisted mainly of academics and researchers, and understandings of the Pavilion were mostly conditioned by these doctored photographs that "raised" the structure "to the status of masterpiece—mostly by critics who had never seen it" (Evans 1990, 56). This is ascertained by Juan Pablo Bonta's 1979 documentation in *Architecture and Its Interpretation* that provides an analysis through the chronological examination of texts which "attempted an interpretation of the building and its significance—by journalists, critics and historians" to expose certain overlooked interpretative patterns (Bonta 1979, 131). More interestingly, in many instances, the publication further revealed that opinions of the Pavilion were the consequences of assumptions, personal conjectures, and inaccurate deductions that further contributed to the plethora of different readings and interpretations.

This collection of material formed the basis of the 1986 reconstruction that was commissioned by the Barcelona Urban Planning Department. Despite being a complete replica, the building is recognized as a Cultural Asset of National Interest (BCIN) by the Generalitat de Catalunya and a Monument to the Spanish Historical Heritage (BIC) by the Spanish Ministry. These classifications further necessitate that the reconstructed building remain in a fixed state maintained to specific requirements. Hence the work remains reverential to the myth of Mies' and relies on rhetoric to sustain its iconic reputation and heritage status. Even the furnishings are kept to a minimum in order to maintain the spatial integrity and vague function of the 1929/30 building that was designed explicitly to be exhibited.⁵ The rituals of maintaining the reconstructed Pavilion at particular levels to counter deterioration require the constant erasure of all marks left by history and people.⁶ In this instance, this seems to be the focus of carefully considered design decisions as the 1986 reconstruction team Ignasi Solà Morales, Cristian Circi and Fernando Ramos stated clearly in the 1993 publication, *Mies van der Rohe: Barcelona Pavilion* that their ambition was not to "raise anew a building following exactly the same technical specifications of the 1929/30 Pavilion, but with a view to guaranteeing its permanence" (Solà Morales, Circi and Ramos 1993, 29). Hence, the replica is treated as an object focused on recreating material qualities while neglecting the intangible essences in the form of history and character.

At present, a Board of Trustees is directly responsible for the upkeep and appearance of the reconstructed Pavilion, putting forth

this work of architecture as an educational resource, and an archive in itself. Hence it is important that the stances on control and presentation that inadvertently extends to the different ownerships over both the archival material and 1986 building are integrated into aspects of learning as an attempt to bridge the dissemination of knowledge concerning two histories. The understanding in which observation is prioritized over physical activity is encouraged by the Pavilion's history because of its short existence.⁷ This initiated an emphasis and reliance on visual representation that extended into the following five decades when the building was known solely through photographs and texts. This also means that the layered readings and intellectual understandings that are nuanced and complex remains very much the purview of the privileged design community and especially architectural academia, who understand and appreciate the importance of the fragmented past as well as diverse and dispersed material sources. Alternatively, the wider audience is presented with the heavily edited linear trajectory of the Pavilion, transposed from the Exposition to the current construct. Most importantly, knowledge of the Pavilion's history influence the meaning and the way recipients respond to the different aspects and fragments of the work and especially, the potency of their experiences when engaging with it. While the various mediums and diverse ideas of use from the photographs of the second iteration to the realized reconstructed building radiate from the 1929/30 Pavilion, time and site-specificity are also key considerations. The first refers to the precise instances when the archival material and/or reconstructed building is accessed, and the latter to the fact that the surroundings have since altered drastically. Contextual anchors that no longer exist include the symmetrical layout of the Gran Plaza, the row of sandstone columns that marked the geometrical boundary of the Exposition's central area that aligned with the front of the 1929/30 Pavilion, and the exceptionally large German and Spanish flags positioned symmetrically in front to introduce color and movement to contrast with the "strict geometry and form" (Solà Morales, Circi and Ramos 1993, 7, 8, 19, 28).⁸ Having analyzed the precision of Mies' design decisions concerning site-specificity, the reconstruction team acknowledged that the authenticity of the new Pavilion is also dependent on restoring particular aspects of the site to encapsulate the essence of Mies' original design. Therefore the advocacy for participation must be read in relation to numerous factors that include the users' intention, the iteration of the Pavilion in question, the type of material accessed and the context of engagement. Though fragmented, these attributes concerning authorship of use are important.

As a work of architecture, this discourse concerns the overlooked possibilities of occupancy, conceivable only because reconstruction has additionally allowed the 1986 Pavilion to be experienced simultaneously through visual and tactile appropriation. This allows for the complimentary complex visual and sensory qualities and ideas of an

“autonomous spatial experience” that enables the visitor to see and be seen simultaneously (Solà Morales, Circi and Ramos 1993, 28). Occupancy fully exploits the gaps inherent in ideas of conceptual and spatial fluidity between exterior and interior. Here, authorship of use diversifies to include all visitors to this third version of the Pavilion and asserts the relevance of participation to generate new design ambitions and complete the meaning of the work. As a result it can be argued that, until 1986, half the architectural intentions of Mies’ 1929/30 Pavilion as a work of architecture were omitted. It is these interpretations and experiences of the reconstructed building that constitute the fourth Pavilion.

Montage and the creative user

Given the vast and disparate sources of information regarding the Pavilion, the construction of an autonomous nonhierarchical structure is key to dialectical practices that facilitates the creation of new and multiple readings where meanings are predominantly reliant on the users’ interpretations (Lau 2023, 381). In *Actions of Architecture* (2003), Jonathan Hill argues that architecture is made by use and design and hence the creativity of the user “either produces a new space or gives an existing one meanings and uses contrary to established behaviour” (Hill 2003, 86). Here, the contributions of the creative user to design practice is fundamental to the techniques of montage and in particular, the employment of an intellectual montage to engage the users and encourage active participation in the dynamic process of constructing original work and/or experiences (Tafari 1977, 78). To exploit the creativity of the user, the acquisition and dissemination of archival material requires an inclusive and non-hierarchical framework that is open ended, allows the work to remain unfinished and “available for endless revisions and appropriations” (Hill 2003, 200).

Thus montage as a multidisciplinary tool that encourages parallel insights, each from its own perspective as opposed to a common outcome is used to explore participation dependent polyvalent eidetic experiences in conjunction with the notion of architectural dialectics. The inevitable shifts and gaps are further exploited through emergent proto-practices that prioritize different skillsets and experimental modes. Most importantly, the testing of ideas occur prior to the formalization of methods. These explorations include the lacuna between the three Pavilions—beginning with the didactic approaches dictated by different authors and/or owners, the array of meaning as consequences of the multiple fragments and the eventual material produced through habitation that fully acknowledge the relationship between the exterior and interior boundaries of the building. All of these unmediated productive forces exist as independent entities that generate new meanings demonstrating that the work is not only deemed complete by the user through active participation but celebrates the friction and tension apparent in both the manners of

dissemination and consumption. This is important to the practice of architecture because the idea of a single claim to authorship of design for any of the Pavilions is highly questionable. This not only contradicts the widely accepted notion that a building from concept to execution is the result of a single architect or a team of architects with similar intentions, but that works of architecture can function meaningfully and effectively without user input.⁹

In conjunction with Manfredo Tafuri's discourse on intellectual montage, Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* (1999) is referenced in discussions concerning architectural dialectics and notions of plurality where new meanings are produced through juxtaposition and adjacency. To Benjamin, history is understood from the user's perspective and historical transformation is not progressive (Benjamin 2003). Hence montage is approached as a "philosophy of history" that focuses on the "discontinuities separating past and present" (Cohen 2004, 200–201). This position was articulated through his representation and critique of nineteenth-century Parisian bourgeois society and his fascination with life beneath the arcades in *The Arcades Project*. Benjamin not only considered these arcades—described as a "cross between a street and an interior"—to be "the most important architectural form of the nineteenth-century," but also where the most interesting and relevant depictions of the century's preoccupations occurred (Benjamin 1973, 37; Eiland 1999, viii). In this microcosm where conceptual and material boundaries dematerialize and spaces are absorbed by the city, the notion of dialectics is employed to simultaneously show the opposing "regressive elements" and "utopian potentials" of nineteenth-century Parisian culture (Cohen 2004, 215). Similar to Mies' idea of continuous progression, where the thresholds between facades and enclosed spaces remain undefined, the interior spaces of the Parisian arcades are experienced as extensions of city's streets and vice versa. A working system that respected the differences of the events juxtaposed within the spaces was invented to effectively capture the basic essence and characteristics of these arcades. Benjamin's interpretation of this task was reflected in his complete disregard for material that has been "accredited as precious and valuable," with his choice of research matter consisting of the "dispersed and frequently arcane sources" in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (Schwarz 2007, 252). The notion of multiple interpretations is demonstrated through his technique of researching, constructing and organizing the contents of the work allowing perceived "waste material to enter into significant connections" (252–3). The principles of montage are evident in the arrangement of the six chapters of the book, designed to operate independently and enable "the work to be continuously remade anew," by each reader (Hill 2003, 108). Benjamin's approach to montage and dialectics operate as a critique of ideology that rejects synthesis and existing narratives in the echelons of accepted scholarly research. Here,

authorship of use from participation ensures that the resulting fragments and fragmented permutations are furthered to enable new open ended and incomplete readings that reveal original perspectives on history.

Similarly, archiving the histories of the Pavilions to accommodate the chronological gaps and didactic approaches dictated by the different owners, authorities and/or all the different users require a system that is nonhierarchical and enable the ongoing acquisition of both material and experiential fragments to be continuous and in flux. Similar to these discussions of dialectics which maintain that the acquisition of knowledge is neither linear nor seamless, the ensuing experiences of the fourth Pavilion are not meant to be singular and continuous but fragmented and juxtaposed. Authorship concerning the practice of design and archival research are further explored through issues of provenance and acquisition, conservation and preservation, control and presentation of the subject matter, as well as site-specificity and displacement. This sets up infinite opportunities for the work of architecture to be completed by the user and the ensuing asynchronous qualities celebrate the disjunctions between the tactile experiences of a tangible site, theoretical and historical narratives from archival material, all which are juxtaposed to conjure up meaningful and individual experiences through active participation. These strategies are designed to reduce the polarity between designer and user to nullify the omnipresent emphasis on attribution, originality and intellectual property. In this instance, this alludes to the differences between the multiple ways the building could be experienced as opposed to fixed representations. The argument concerning montage is especially “appropriate to user creativity in architecture because the building is not experienced all at once,” but in “moments separated by gaps in climate, space and time” (Hill 2003, 200). These experiential moments form part of the exploration concerning architectural fragments as the reading of architecture over time takes into account the fact that “buildings long outlive the purposes for which they were built, the technologies by which they were constructed and the aesthetics that determined their form” (Coates 2012, 10).¹⁰ These shifts—and the ensuing gaps between form, function and site—create opportunities for differences of opinions concerning meaning and use to emerge. This discussion of historiography through ideas of proto-practices sees the reconstructed Pavilion shaped by the users through different approaches to occupancy and how these are documented in diverse mediums. The creative use of this material advances the plurality of meanings and temporalities, highlighting the inherent disparities and conflicts. This ascertains that the reconstructed Pavilion does not exist simply as a means to layer readings upon but more importantly, functions as a generative force that constructs, dismantles and rebuilds new meanings from theoretical and material fragments. Hence the reconstruction becomes an operative body of work that functions as a record

of time, and provides a past that can still be experienced in the present. These and the experimental systems of proto-practices that contain and communicate the new narratives, assemblies and/or reveal overlooked qualities become the fourth Pavilion.

The reproduction of authentic originals and “aura”

Discussions of what actually constitutes the Pavilion have revealed its fragmented history with the value of the gaps explored through techniques of montage and dialectics to foreground processes and outcomes of user-led participation. Here, notions concerning originality and authenticity associated with occupancy and individual encounters with all the material to date and in particular the reconstructed Pavilion continue with explorations of analogue and digital reproduction, beginning with an analysis of “aura” in Walter Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936). This notion of “aura” is referenced to Benjamin’s definition regarding the reproduction of artworks and the uncompromising suggestion that authenticity results from a reading of the work located within its place of origin. The unique original is associated with a “singularity in time and space,” that they depend for their claim to “authority and authenticity” (Benjamin 1936, 217, 233). Hence the “most perfect reproduction” will undoubtedly be lacking in “its presence in time and space” and this “unique existence” is defined as the “aura” of the “work of art” (214–5). This is considered alongside the notion of “phenomenon of distance” that includes the provenance of scale, location, history as well as ritual, function and social integration (216).¹¹ The intrinsic pre-secular relationship between the artwork and its ritualistic functions is habitual and accomplished gradually in fragments. Hence this manner of tactile appropriation can be compared to that of a building and the notion of repeated use. Additionally, the term “antaeic magic” was proposed by the art historian Aby Warburg to describe the “release of latent memories through direct contact” (Ekman 2012, 100).¹² The integral relationship between experience and context is furthered by Aleida Assmann, who maintains that “antaeic magic is anchored in the authenticity of the historical site,” and is defined by their “aura” (148).¹³ As permanence and specificity of a particular site enables the unique qualities associated with “aura” to be induced, recognized and applied, the notion of “aura”, in essence, can be read as the site-specific experiential qualities embedded in a work of architecture. This also means that these dormant qualities and the reciprocation of “aura” requires the engagement of users and/or participants. Akin to the reader completing the meaning of *The Arcades Project* through their own individual formulations, the users’ unique experiences of engagement are required to generate original and authentic interpretations of “aura.”

While uniqueness is inseparable from history and tradition, different interpretations occur as a result of the shifting historical context

in which the object is located. Given that a work of architecture is appropriated differently by different people, the shifts that occur enable new interpretations each time the building is experienced by the senses of sight and touch as combined and/or separately. In this instance of the Pavilions, the analysis encompasses all theoretical and material sources of information in different mediums, iterations, as well as intellectual and experiential encounters. These ideas and Benjamin's arguments regarding the relationship between reproduction and "aura" are analyzed alongside three texts.¹⁴ These are: Sidney Tillim, "Benjamin Rediscovered, The Work of Art After the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1983), Douglas Davis, "The Work of Art in the Age of Digital Reproduction (An Evolving Thesis 1991–1995)" (1995) and Werner Schweibenz, "The Work of Art in the Age of Digital Reproduction" (2018). The gaps in Benjamin's discourse are raised and extended within the realm of technological advancements and in particular digital technology to progress his key points of site-specificity, distance and singularity. Hence the meaning of Mies' 1929/30 building, now completed by occupancy as a result of the reconstructed Pavilion, is furthered through different methods of usage and participation to enable the continuous creation of different interpretations of "aura." While the notions of reproduction in these arguments differ from Benjamin's, this process has nonetheless allowed the work to be made available to the masses and the multiplicity of individual experiences drastically alter discussions of what constitutes original and authentic.¹⁵

Half a century after Benjamin, Tillim locates his analysis in the interstitial gaps amid the binary suppositions between "aura" and an original work of art as a singular entity through arguments for different ideas of plurality. First, as auratic distance and qualities are non-empirical, the idea that mass reproduction facilitates accessibility and enables the work of art to be introduced to a wider audience actually assures its longevity and subsequently creates a longing for "aura" as opposed to devaluation. Engaging with reproductions in different media create multiple readings and understandings of the work that evoke and enrich the original through associative memory (Tillim 1983, 69, 73). This reasoning is highly relevant to the second iteration during which the Pavilion was only accessible through photographs and textual descriptions. This argument regarding change in medium from an exhibition building to images is discussed alongside notions of technical hybrids where the combination of genres sees the development of an authentic image culture. Here, mass production and anonymity are considered assets to both authors and users as catalysts for enabling unrestricted creative freedom.¹⁶ Notions of authorship are altered as the mechanical processes of translating and documenting through different mediums changes the "character and function" of the work (67). To assume that a digital image is simply a technologically advanced form of a physical photograph ignores the fact that differences in material characteristics have cultural

consequences (Schweibenz 2018, 10).¹⁷ As a result, authorship of use is subsequently affected through changed manners of consumption and importantly, allows the work to develop its own “aura.” The shift from Mies’ building at the Exposition—only experienced by few—to the ensuing collection of images that reached a much wider audience privileged visual over tactile characteristics. This not only means that the experiential qualities of Mies’ original design intentions could not be fully appreciated, but also that eventual encounters with the reconstructed building are somewhat influenced by the fact that the work was first known through visual means. The archive of photographs that remain the only visual record of Mies’ 1929/30 Pavilion are fundamental resources that until now, greatly affects how the work is understood and appreciated. This bias dilutes the full appreciation of spatial qualities through eventual tactile encounters and possibly truncates the generation of creative ideas regarding ways to read and use the building during occupancy. However, as “aura” is also generated during changes of state, Mies’ set of photographs are original and authentic to a particular narrative and context. This discernment overlooks the linear chronology and diminishes assumptions that Mies’ photographs are substitutions and of lesser value to his building. In this instance, the photographs are original pieces of work, authored by Mies and show different—and possibly more accurate—articulations of certain intentions through prioritizing aspects that are perhaps better approached visually.¹⁸ Hence with regards to this second iteration, authenticity and the production of “aura” continues with authorship of use through original processes of reproducing these photographs.

The boundary between authorship of design and use is further blurred as intangible qualities emerge during the transfer of “aura” from the work to the process of engagement (Davis 1995, 381). A decade on, discussions concerning medium and especially digital reproduction as having negated all distinctions between what constitutes original and authentic highlights the nuances between the alleged superior original and repetitive versus revisional copies (Davis 1995, 385). This is firstly referenced to the proliferation of images reproduced from Mies’ original photographs, all of which contributed to readings of the second Pavilion. The reasoning shifts in discussions of a “post-original original” and, in particular, born-digital pieces of work where changes in quality or state during the working processes are negligible (Davis 1995, 383). Digitization and the ensuing collapse of distance also mean that “aura” has simultaneously permeated into the realms of reproduction as technical and experiential processes. This opens up discussions concerning collective networks of interconnected material and systems that facilitate multiple authors and new ideas of diversity and universality.¹⁹ Likewise the qualities of an asynchronous archive where the facilitation of multiple actions at different and irregular intervals are accommodated and most importantly, valued. This applies to born-digital work that uses

Mies' doctored photographs and/or the reconstructed Pavilion as primary sources.

Similar to notions concerning authorship of use and antaëic magic, "aura" resides "not in the thing itself but in the originality of the moment," of interaction. The fragmented transformative qualities allow the dematerialized presence of "aura" to be reconfigured as an idea, symbol, et al. as appropriate to the said moment (Davis 1995, 384, 386). This notion of transience and dissemination in the digital age is revisited by Schweibenz more than twenty years after Davis through examining states of aggregation in works of art. These e-tangible pieces are understood first and foremost through digital means regardless of whether they are actually "material," "immaterial," or "digital" (Schweibenz 2018, 10). Similar to Tillim's argument that "aura" is enhanced through prior encounters with reproductions, the readily available digital images on a quotidian basis evokes latent memories and conditions eventual reactions when confronted with the original. This intangible counterpart cannot be isolated from the tangible original, hence presenting the digital surrogate with its own intrinsic value (11). Advancing technology has also reignited issues of displacement, site and site-specificity to further demonstrate the migratory and omnipresent qualities of "aura" through digital facsimiles that replicate exact scaled copies in place of the absent original for customized locations. Here, the interaction of the replicated building and site of origin enables genuine intentions to be restituted and comparable to antaëic magic, validates the argument that the value of the work is embedded within precise spatial qualities of the architecture and vice versa. The ensuing "aura" from this site-specific recreation that reunites the tangible and intangible qualities is created and experienced by the user as the meaning of work is simultaneously completed.

The ensuing reproductions documented in all forms and—especially those of user experiences that ensue from the reproduced 1986 Pavilion—actually enables, enhances and completes its "aura." The arguments raised by all three texts have demonstrated that reproductions regardless of media enhances the worth of the original as "the process of making a copy indicates the esteem in which the original is held" (Latour and Lowe 2011, 278). The consequences of advancing digital technology together with social and cultural shifts alter the relationship between the audience and the work, and reveal the multifaceted transient and shifting qualities inherent to "aura." These are transformative, fluid and dependent on the users' prior experiences with alternative versions of the work that influence the eventual encounter with the original. Hence as technology advances, ideas of montage conveyed through dialectical experiences support Benjamin's stance that history is understood from the vantage point of the user. In this instance, user participation in all iterations of the Pavilion permeates the intellectual and experiential gaps to complete the meaning of the work. This also means that ideas of authenticity

changes through the availability of eidetic experiences in different media and modes to create inclusive polyvalent experiences and consequently new definitions of antaenic magic and “aura.” With regards to the fourth Pavilion, the abolishment of linearity and hierarchy dilutes the authorship of Mies’ and all the commissioning authorities to celebrate the contributions of mass production concerning this work of architecture.

Authentic experiences of use and the toolkit of asynchronous intangible experiences

The questioning of original and authentic begins with Mies’ didactic approach to authorship and presentation of the subject matter by optimizing the reproduction of doctored photographs to perpetuate his myth. This preconditioning influences the way the 1929/30 Pavilion is regarded, discussed and substantially determines what the users see and choose to look at when visiting the physical replicated building. Hence until now, the intangible subconscious mental constructs and memories from the photographic surrogates affect reactions to the tangible counterpart. Authorship of design by the reconstruction team extended to the 1993 publication where given the differing accounts available, the research and construction processes adhered to a series of priority criteria. The material was carefully edited and considered against the 1929/30 construction records during the build, with the main focus of creating a permanent representation of Mies’ building (Sola Morales, Circi and Ramos 1993, 29). The chronological documentation also structured the publication’s contents which, in this argument, becomes an archive of the reconstruction. Therefore, the 1986 Pavilion is an original body of work and the resulting building is authentic to the book. They are archives of each other within an invariable and restrictive relationship, achieving the critical intent to create a fixed and static replica. While this attests to predetermined ideas of what the architecture should be, the book consequently serves as a template and tool that enables further reproductions. This subsequently raises questions of multiplicity and whether copies of the Pavilions in different locations are legitimate given that provenance is based on a constructed narrative that inadvertently affects architectural discourse concerning original and authentic.

The reconstruction enabled the proliferation of digital images to be disseminated on different platforms. This progresses in parallel with ideas of use, with occupancy initially restricted to curated clients like royalty and the German authorities to the inclusion of all the different types of users at present. This non-exhaustive list includes people in the architecture profession, academics, staff, tourists and those who have only engaged with the Pavilion through remote sources like images, videos and augmented reality. The reconstruction that sees the Pavilion return to material form enables the generation of “aura” through occupancy and the creation of new images that include

unprecedented user perspectives and experiences.²⁰ Here, the arguments concerning “aura,” reciprocity and issues of original and authentic see the different ideas of participation juxtaposed against the multiple iterations of the Pavilion, each producing their own “auras.” While occupancy enables means of tactile engagement that was not possible for half a century, the presence of visitors also alters the course of provenance because haptic interactions leave traces. Both Mies and the reconstruction team have attempted to limit and remove evidence of use through issues of authorship, conservation and presentation in order for the building to retain its iconic status.²¹ The first by image manipulation and the latter through approaching the building more as an object with an overstated exhibition value than architecture that is validated through usage. Hence Mies’ design ethos concerning the dialectical user-led experimental qualities that were not possible until 1986 are presently foregrounded as a crucial aspect of appreciating and understanding the work. Similar to the photographs of the second iteration that conserved and shaped the memory of Mies’ dismantled building and bolstered its visibility, material from the 1986 building is likewise perceived through continuous methods of reproduction that express individual perspectives. This increased permeability reinforces the position that the different means of reproduction contributes to the work’s significance. The mass reproduction through an asynchronous plethora of media and modes has exponentially accelerated dissemination and access to rejuvenate “aura.” As a result these generative processes are original to the resources at hand and the outcomes authentic to the users’ intentions, context and manners of use.

The emerging body of work that constitutes the fourth Pavilion adds to the practices of design and archival research to challenge established theories and test their legitimacy. The cumulative tale now extends to manifest the fragmented qualities of existing material and more importantly, endeavors to acknowledge traces of use and history through the presence of historical, human and/or climatic interventions (Lau 2020). The narratives emerging from the interior experiences of the users not only complete the work of architecture but further dissolve boundaries between all the different audiences. The trajectory from Mies’ concealment of imperfections, suppressed by manipulating images to the visibility of individual expressions afforded by the 1986 replica in the fluid context of dissemination accelerated by digital reproduction and technological advancements has once again, shifted the meaning of the work.

The history of all the Pavilions and their respective processes of reproducing and multiplying is entrenched in the “aura” of the 1986 building, as well as its copies. As technology expands and enhances archival practices, there will be an emphasis on the opportunities afforded by virtual reality environments that recreate interior experiences to foster reenactments of use, augmenting eidetic and embodied experiences. At present, the unique interlocking exterior and interior

spatial qualities locates the visitor in an orchestrated visual field while immersed in the architecture. The experiences are relational, momentary and dependent on climatic conditions and individual navigational decisions. This differs for the remote digital viewer who engages with the architecture through removed and/or displaced reality where ideas of scale for instance, are discounted. While virtual occupancy recognizes the Pavilion as a work of architecture, the diminution of the gaps and/or intermediate spaces which are the “productive forces in the generation of meaning through active involvement of a critical audience,” is further initiated by the seamless amalgamation of pictorial elements into virtual images by way of digital rendering practices (Stierli 2018). As Artificial Intelligence develops, experiential possibilities also shift from representational to speculative. Hence the argument that digitization and digital reproduction started as analogue processes parallels the narratives of the past, present and future Pavilions. The 1986 replica however, still attests to the fact that digital images and virtual encounters cannot replace the physical building where works of architecture are concerned because of the absence of materiality. The virtual mediated experience is incomplete, prioritizing vision and relegating the potential to activate and optimize the remaining senses. This further negates discussions concerning antaenic magic and latent qualities in relation to important issues of site-specificity.

The recording and recounting of history is not a linear process and all views expressed are interpretations of selected research material. This understanding stems from the underlying argument that “there is always a history of drawings, objects and buildings within and against which an architectural work can be seen” (Manolopoulou 2013, 124).²² The pluralist world of material made available by technology and, in particular, the internet has resulted in an influx of individual approaches and distinct combinations of consumption. Hence this consideration can be furthered to include the fact that the conditions within and against which the work is measured, also enables the meaning of architecture to be continuously extended. Here, Hill’s aforementioned ideas regarding the creative user are read in conjunction with Roland Barthes’ “The Death of the Author” (1977) that acknowledges the shifts which occur in the meaning of the text during the process of reading. While Barthes does not condone the total erasure of authorship, this spontaneous transformation of the text’s meaning through the reader’s active engagement should take precedence over the author’s intentions and provenance. Hence, simply by making decisions about what to access, the reader and/or user assumes a form of authorship and the dynamics between them and the author shifts. This awareness of the creativity of the user, and explorations of author-audience relationships also include writings by Umberto Eco and Mikhail Bakhtin. Eco’s *The Open Work* (1981) explores the capacity for user intervention to shape the reading and completion of creative work while

enabling the technique of montage to exploit the interpretative qualities of appropriation through the author's organizational techniques. In Eco's terms, the author presents the workings and components of a tool-kit and the poetics emerge as the user conceives personal modes of interpretations. In *The Dialogic Imagination* (Bakhtin 1981), Bakhtin describes the polyphonic novel as having a multi-character approach where active dialogue and multiple perspectives enables meaning to first be derived from the interactions amongst the characters, and consequently between the author, the work and the reader. This idea was developed in relation to Fyodor Dostoevsky's writings and the concept of polyphony is borrowed from music and literally means multiple voices. A key feature sees "the narrator renouncing the right to the last word and granting full and equal authority to the word of the characters" (Dentith 1995, 36–40).²³ Reading the contexts of the Pavilions and the different iterations against each other highlight the inherent presence of multiplicity, establishing that "aura" lies in the originality of the tangible, intangible, analogue and/or digital moments (Davis 1995, 38). This applies to the decentralized multi-authored sources of information, furthered by digital means of reproduction, assimilation and dissemination that now includes personal encounters and ephemeral experiences made available and possible by the reconstructed Pavilion. These continuous processes of contributing and accessing contradicts Benjamin's assertion that plurality occurs in opposition to a "unique existence" (Benjamin 1936, 221). In effect through multiplicity, an inclusive form of experiential specificity and precision emerges.

The consideration of new ways to discuss and present archival material that consequently generates critical thinking through reflective practices and design work is imperative. Currently, the presence of the Pavilions are articulated through an asynchronous archive consisting of historical, theoretical, material, conceptual, spatial, social and cultural fragments. These are further devised as dialogues that include the combined experiences of the users through interactions. These ideas concerning authorship of design and use are shown in the two figures where personal emotions of spatial embodiment evoked during the visit are articulated through large scale works of calligraphy.

This demonstrates how the new narratives of the fourth Pavilion serve to confront, place and integrate chronological shifts that initiate multiple interpretations. Consequently, events and knowledge that would otherwise be consigned to memory or totally forgotten are retold and given new readings and meanings. These design conversations resulting from the immediacy of the users reaction to and, reading of the moment are fluid, transformative and enable history to be re-presented and, most importantly, take on its own relevance in this present day. Hence the appropriateness of montage as a tool that reconciles these fragments to generate and create new meanings are demonstrated. This inherent method of understanding



Figure 1.

Post visit, this large-scale piece of calligraphy is devised as a response to, and expression of, the 1986 reconstructed Barcelona Pavilion. The acts of composing and making creates a dialogue between the artist and subject matter that are spatial and experiential. Here, the work values impermanence not as loss, but as clarity, care and presence. © 2025, Ken McParland.



Figure 2.

Dissemination through the different media of digital stills and videos enable the outcomes to be extended to a wider audience. The interpretations and meanings shift as "aura" is recreated at every stage of this personalized articulation of yet another version of the Barcelona Pavilion. Hence, the work shown in both these images are instances that constitute the fourth Pavilion. © 2025, Ken McParland.

history and expanding archival material acquired through new working processes and practices is protracted to the future.

In this instance, discussions concerning digital technology, virtual sensations and environments extend the relationships between antaenic magic and “aura,” manifesting in new definitions of original and authentic that simultaneously emphasize the gaps in history. The reproduced versions that are responses to different conditions, circumstances and decisions also reveal the preoccupations of their origins (Schweibenz 2018, 19). These discussions concerning tangible and intangible characteristics realign the aforementioned states of aggregation and alter the path of the Pavilion’s history. Appropriately “the real phenomenon to be accounted for is not the punctual delineation of one version from all others but the whole assembly made up of one—or several—original(s) together” (Latour and Lowe 2011, 278). This application of montage establishes that multiple interpretations are inevitable as the embodied occupants as contributors become part of the work (Lau 2016, 284). Hence the continuous deconstructing and reconstructing of meaning is unique and subjective, emphasizing the notion of unfinished openness to once again corroborate that ideas of original and authentic concerning the Pavilions are constantly in flux.

Notes

1. The project “An Original Copy” (1998) in the chapter “Weather Architecture” presupposes the users to be specific weather conditions that occupies and alters the state of the 1986 reconstructed Pavilion.
2. Germany’s renewed image was that of an organic society founded on “work as a source of value,” expressed through “modern industrial work.” Hence the idea of inclusiveness meant that issues of hierarchy, submission and exploitation concerning authority were no longer in contention. (Quetglas 2000, 27).
3. The 1929/30 Pavilion stood for six months. The chromed steel components were sent to Berlin and the remaining steel structures were sold as scrap in Barcelona. The onyx marble was retrieved by the supplier Köstner and Gottschalk for reuse with a small piece as a table top in Dr Ruegenberg’s home in Berlin and Mies’ apartment in Chicago. Finally, the foundations were planted over to eliminate all visible traces of the building. The 1986 reconstruction is currently owned by the Fundació Mies van der Rohe.
4. The main archives were the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin and Institut Municipal d’Història de Barcelona, Barcelona.
5. The notion of temporality is continued through keeping the function similar to that of the 1929/30 Pavilion. The reconstructed Pavilion serves as “a representative space” for the Fira Internacional de Mostres de Barcelona, or City Council of Barcelona and is a “symbolic venue in which to hold openings,

- presentations and other formal social events” (Solà Morales, Circi and Ramos 1993, 29).
6. The project “Phantom. Mies as Rendered Society,” 2012–2017, by Andres Jaque focused on the basement that was part of the reconstruction. This addition was used to house cleaning tools and fragments from 1986 as well as the 1920/30 building. These objects were displayed all over the reconstructed Pavilion to highlight the contrast between the disorderly but necessary mechanisms below ground versus the crystalline perfection of Mies’ vision. Jaque acknowledges the role of architecture as “a social type of construction”. <https://miesbcn.com/project/phantom-mies-as-rendered-society/>. Also note 21.
 7. Essentially Mies’ 1929/30 Pavilion was “an exhibit about exhibition” which interestingly, exhibited “a new way of looking.” This rationale opened up a new category for architectural debate and further contributed to the myth of the building (Colomina 2001, 88).
 8. Mies’ Pavilion was sited as a direct response to the Pavilion of the City of Barcelona that was located at the opposite end of Plaza Gran. Access was also dependant on the French Pavilion. The flags measured (6x9) metres.
 9. This further overlooks the fact that architecture is made by many people, the working processes are often ambiguous and the meaning of authorship changes at different stages of the project.
 10. The quote is referenced to Edward Hollis and the original source is noted as: “Joseph Rykwert. 1981. *On Adam’s House in Paradise, the Idea of the Primitive Hut in Architectural History*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.”
 11. The idea of “historical objects” is further discussed in relation to “natural objects” and the latter expressed as “the unique phenomenon of a distance.” The definition of distance in this instance refers to the extent within which the boundaries of natural objects are located, and is concurrently identified in relation to the notion of nature.
 12. The original source is noted as “A. Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des Kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, 3rd edn., Munich: Beck, 2006, p. 174.” The term “antäische magie” is also used.
 13. The original source is noted as “Assmann, *Der Lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, 2006, p. 223.”
 14. To Benjamin, the trajectory from individual contemplation to mass appropriation results in detachment from, and devaluation of tradition that diminishes “aura.” His Marxist perspective argues for a democratization of culture for the masses, with access accelerated by means of mechanical reproduction and in particular, through the medium of film (Benjamin 1936, 220). This would “serve as a prelude to the development of a modern political cinema which would suffice as both an art for the masses and a solution to the problem of the role of high art in mass society” (Tillim 1983, 69, 72).
 15. Benjamin’s trajectory from original works of art to technological means of reproduction is linear and occurs in one direction. The changes in states from object to film for instance do not fully

consider the outcomes of juxtaposing these different mediums and what becomes of “aura” as a result. Benjamin also warns against nostalgia concerning the over reliance and emphasis on the notion of a unique original. In this instance of the Pavilions, the reference and reverence to history is important and acknowledged in all forms and ongoing ideas of reproduction.

16. To Tillim, “the consanguinity of image and printed text” in the form of illustration is regarded as the “most revolutionizing aspect of mechanical reproduction” (69).
17. A further reference is noted as: Mitchell.1992. *The Reconfigured Eye*.
18. Mies took to removing physical components from the Pavilion such as doors that were installed after the inauguration for security purposes, to accentuate the concept of openness and fluid space (Solà Morales, Circi and Ramos 1993, 30).
19. This is articulated through the project, “The World’s First Collective Sentence.” Started in 1994, this collaborative invitation optimizes the open access made available by the World Wide Web (WWW) that was opened to the public a year earlier. The system enables each uploaded fragment to be unique to the author and until this moment, this never-ending sentence keeps expanding through active contributions (Davis 1995, 382). The project was acquired by The Whitney Museum of American Art in 1995 and remains an ongoing online piece of text that can still be accessed and edited. “Douglas Davis: The World’s First Collaborative Sentence, Launched 1994, Restored 2013.” <https://whitney.org/artport/douglas-davis>
20. The Fundació Mies van der Rohe routinely organizes exhibitions in and around the Pavilion. Consequently, these architectural and artistic interventions are also considered as “occupants” that additionally create interfaces with the building. This and the resulting e-tangible forms of digital images further reconexualize the meaning of the work. <https://miesbcn.com/project/exhibition/>.
21. Contemporary discussions concerning iconic buildings that foreground ideas of occupancy and use include, Jeff Wall’s, “Morning Cleaning” (1999), that communicates the “support system necessary to maintain Mies’ artistic vision.” “Morning Cleaning, Jeff Wall”. <https://miesbcn.com/calendar/morning-cleaning-jeff-wall/>. Also the films of Ila Beka and Louise Lemoine that document architecture from the users’ and back of house viewpoints.
22. A further reference is noted as: Bakhtin. 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination*.
23. Ibid., p. xxix.

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Biography

Dr Constance Lau is an architect, leads and teaches architecture from undergraduate to doctorate levels in London and Singapore. She studied at the National University of Singapore (NUS), Architectural Association (AA) School of Architecture, London and Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London (UCL). Research interests concern architectural design in relation to multiple interpretations, narrative and archives, and are explored through the techniques of montage and different notions of allegory from medieval to contemporary discussions of user-led dialectical participatory processes. The value of the architectural humanities in these theoretical frameworks are dually examined through design driven methods of writing practice. The idea of a questioning and incomplete approach is fundamental. These interdisciplinary approaches are applied through studio design work, doctorates, Research Excellence Framework (REF) standard publishing, peer reviews, and international conferences and workshops. Central to the methodology is the role of design practice as an ongoing dialogue that challenges assumptions and emphasizes authorship. This is further articulated through publications and especially projects in the book *Dialogical Designs* (Lau 2016). Email: lauc@westminster.ac.uk