

Ai Weiwei and Herzog & de Meuron to Design Serpentine Pavilion

The Serpentine Gallery in London announced on Tuesday that the architectural firm Herzog & de Meuron and the artist Ai Weiwei — the brain trust behind the Beijing National Stadium, aka the Bird’s Nest — will collaborate again to create the 2012 Serpentine Gallery Pavilion. The twelfth commission in an annual series of temporary pavilions erected on the gallery’s grounds in Hyde Park, the new structure will be a bowl-shaped auditorium carved into the earth and protected by a flat, circular steel roof raised five feet above ground level. The space will be open to use by the public, as well as for speaking engagements and other programmed events.

The roof will be supported by columns that thematically echo the designs of the previous eleven pavilions. A lip along its perimeter will allow rainwater to accumulate; in a statement from the gallery, the creators described it “floating” at a level at which visitors will “see the water on it, its surface reflecting the infinitely varied, atmospheric skies of London.” They also suggested that the water could be drained to allow the roof to serve as a dance floor or a simple platform above the park.

By reuniting the team behind the Bird’s Nest, which served as the central venue for the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, the gallery hopes to create a sense of architectural continuity between those games and the upcoming Olympiad in London.

The pavilion is set to open in June as part of the London 2012 Festival, a nationwide cultural event that will coincide with the London games.

Kepler, Adam. “Ai Weiwei and Herzog & de Meuron to Design Serpentine Pavilion”, *The New York Times*, February 7, 2012