

ARCHITECTURE | DESIGN | PEOPLE

# PERSPECTIVE

MAY 2018

## DESIGN JOURNEY

SERPENTINE GALLERIES  
PATH TO CHINA

ROCCO YIM  
MUSEUM DISCOVERY

AIRBNB  
HOSPITALITY GAME-CHANGER

DESIGNER TRAVELS  
CREATIVE WAYFINDING



TRENDING FURNITURE  
ANDRÉ FU'S LV SCENOGRAPHY  
LIGHT+BUILDING FRANKFURT REPORT

HKD 60



PERSPECTIVE

MAY 2018

PERSPECTIVEGLOBAL.COM



The Serpentine Sackler Gallery, with its distinctive extension designed by Zaha Hadid, lies close to the original Serpentine Gallery in Kensington Gardens, London

# HOUSE *of* ART

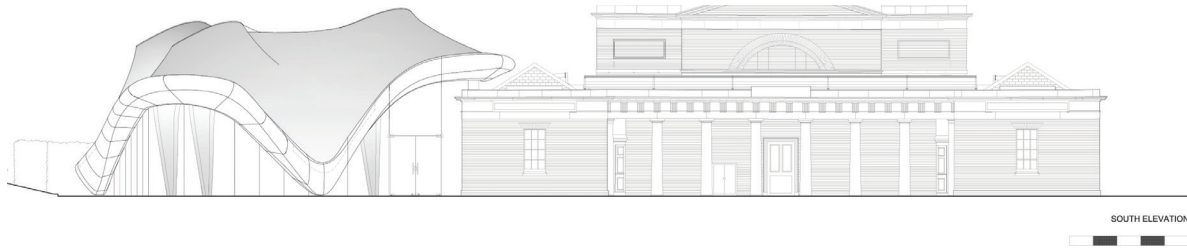
BY DANIELLE DE WOLFE

Long-time champions of international contemporary art and architecture,  
London's Serpentine Galleries are extending their reach to China



A prominent feature in London's art-centric landscape, the Serpentine Galleries have become a staple attraction for design enthusiasts the world over, exhibiting the work of more than 2,263 artists since opening their doors. The focus is on championing the contemporary, showcasing culturally diverse work from the rising stars of tomorrow.

Starting life as a tea pavilion before being protected as a Grade II-listed structure, the Serpentine Gallery building in Kensington Gardens was opened to the public on May 1, 1970. A site abuzz with creativity, the space has since been joined by The Serpentine Sackler Gallery – designed by Pritzker Architecture Prize laureate Zaha Hadid – and the pioneering Serpentine Gallery Pavilion commission.



Zaha Hadid's designs for the Serpentine Sackler Gallery

The concept of an annual pavilion taking up residence on the Serpentine Gallery's lawn was conceived by then director Julia Peyton-Jones. This groundbreaking venture saw the gallery become a site internationally recognised for its stylised architecture, in turn attracting some of the world's leading creative minds. Inaugurated in 2000 with Hadid's distinctive triangulated design, the gallery's pavilion began a tradition of brave and experimental construction.

Spanning 600sqm (6,500sqf), Hadid's design fundamentally reinvented the concept of a marquee structure, transforming a traditionally simplistic space into a bold and immersive design concept. Nearly two decades on, the constraints of the London-based pavilion series remain remarkably modest but the constructions delight the public over a three-month summer period. The design can take no longer than six months to construct from the date of commission and must be a temporary structure with the potential for longevity.



**ABOVE AND BELOW** Zaha Hadid's 2013 addition to the Serpentine Sackler Gallery extended an 1805 gunpowder store



Photos: Luke Hayes



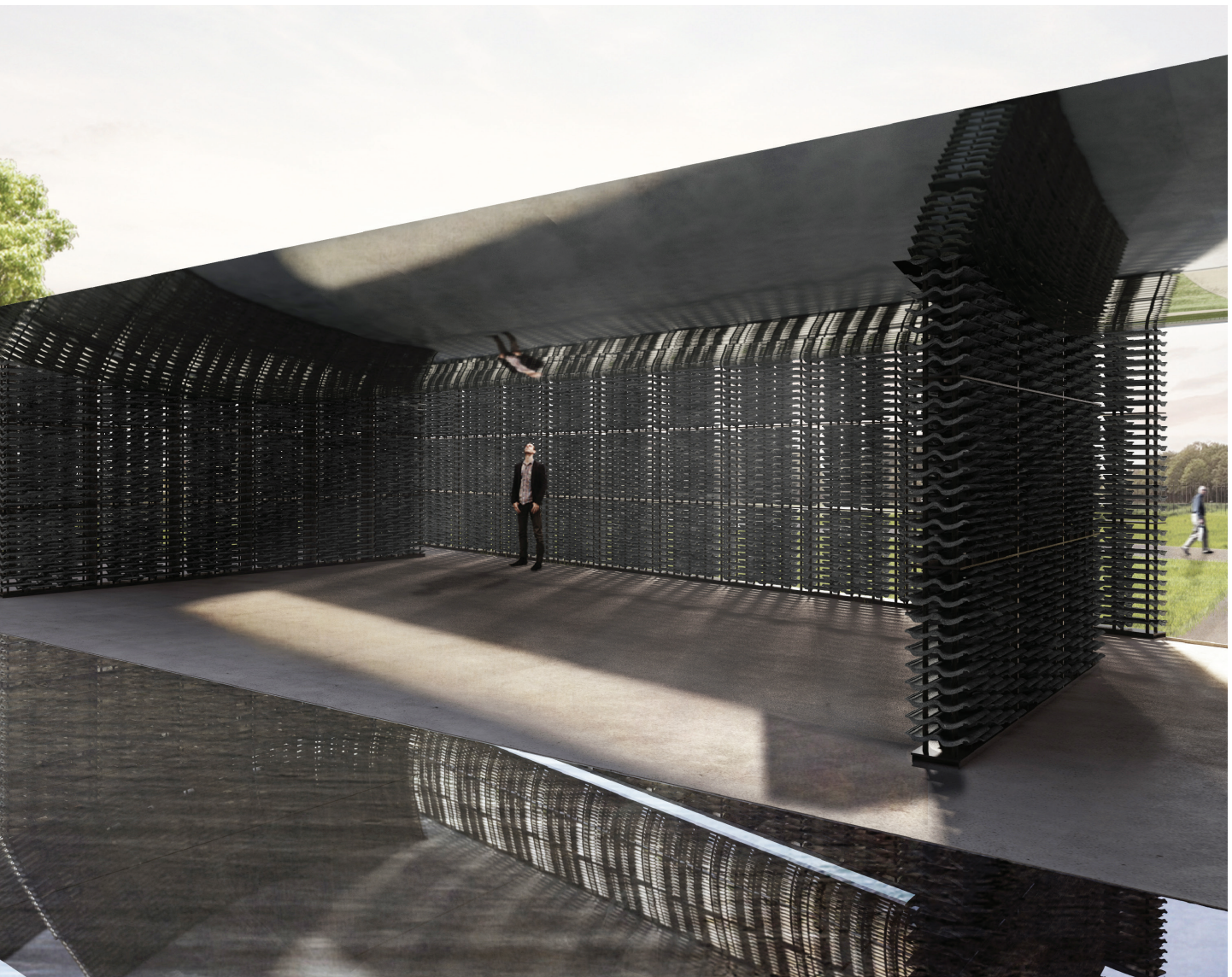
Frida Escobedo is the youngest architect to create the Serpentine Pavilion

## “LIGHT AND SHADOW ARE SUCH A CRUCIAL CONSIDERATION IN MEXICAN ARCHITECTURE”



Frida Escobedo is the architect set to undertake the 2018 pavilion commission in London’s Kensington Gardens. Hailing from Mexico City, she is the youngest creative to have accepted this prestigious challenge, an endeavour she does not enter into lightly.

“The Pavilion has been one of those projects that architects look forward to each year for as long as I’ve been practising – since I was still a student, in fact,” remarks Escobedo. “Fortunately, this is a project that has always been undertaken by architects who possess a remarkable sense of identity. My studio operates in a very different context from the previous architects; we’re working from



Taking the form of an enclosed courtyard, Escobedo's Pavilion comprises two rectangular volumes positioned at an angle

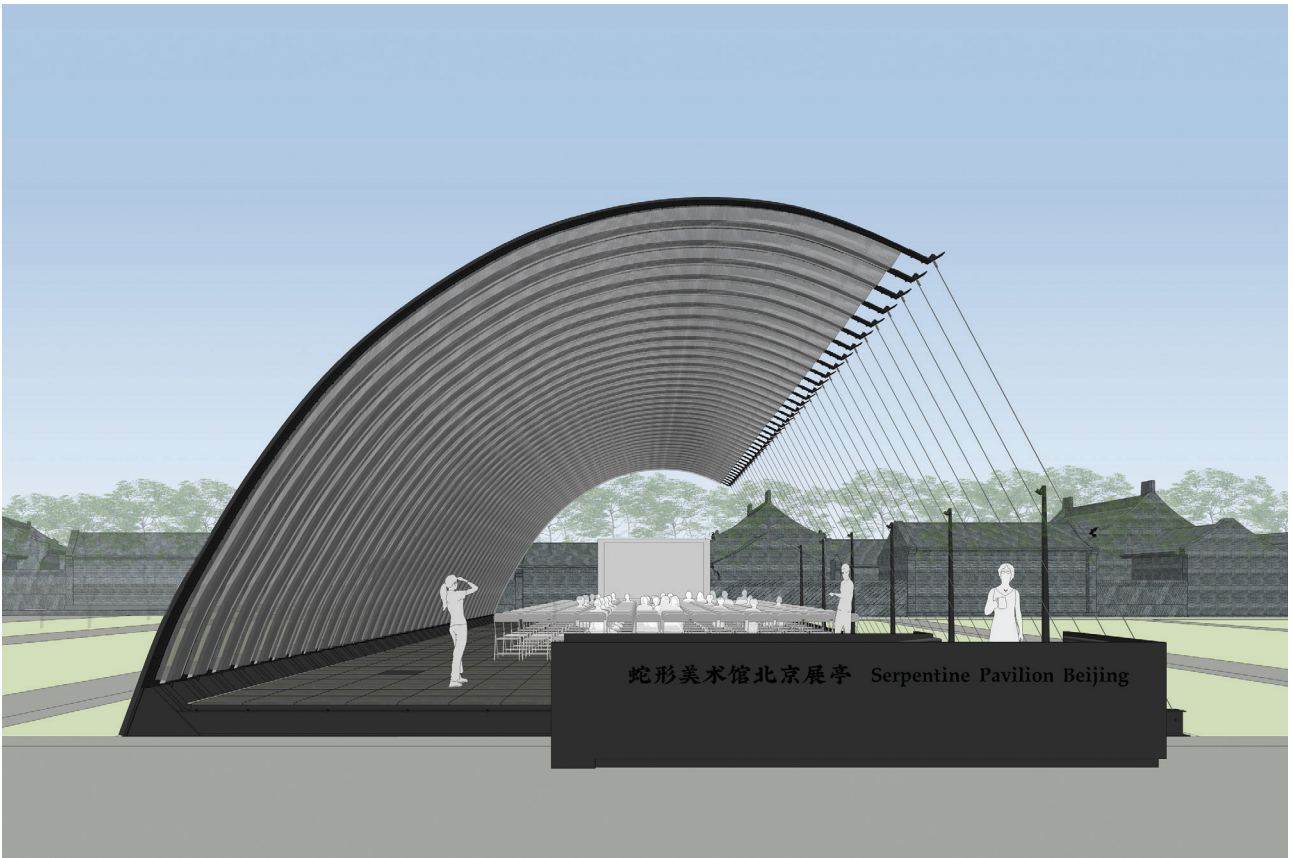
Photo: Taller de Arquitectura, renderings by Atmósfera

experiences and conditions that are, at the end of the day, rooted in our locale.”

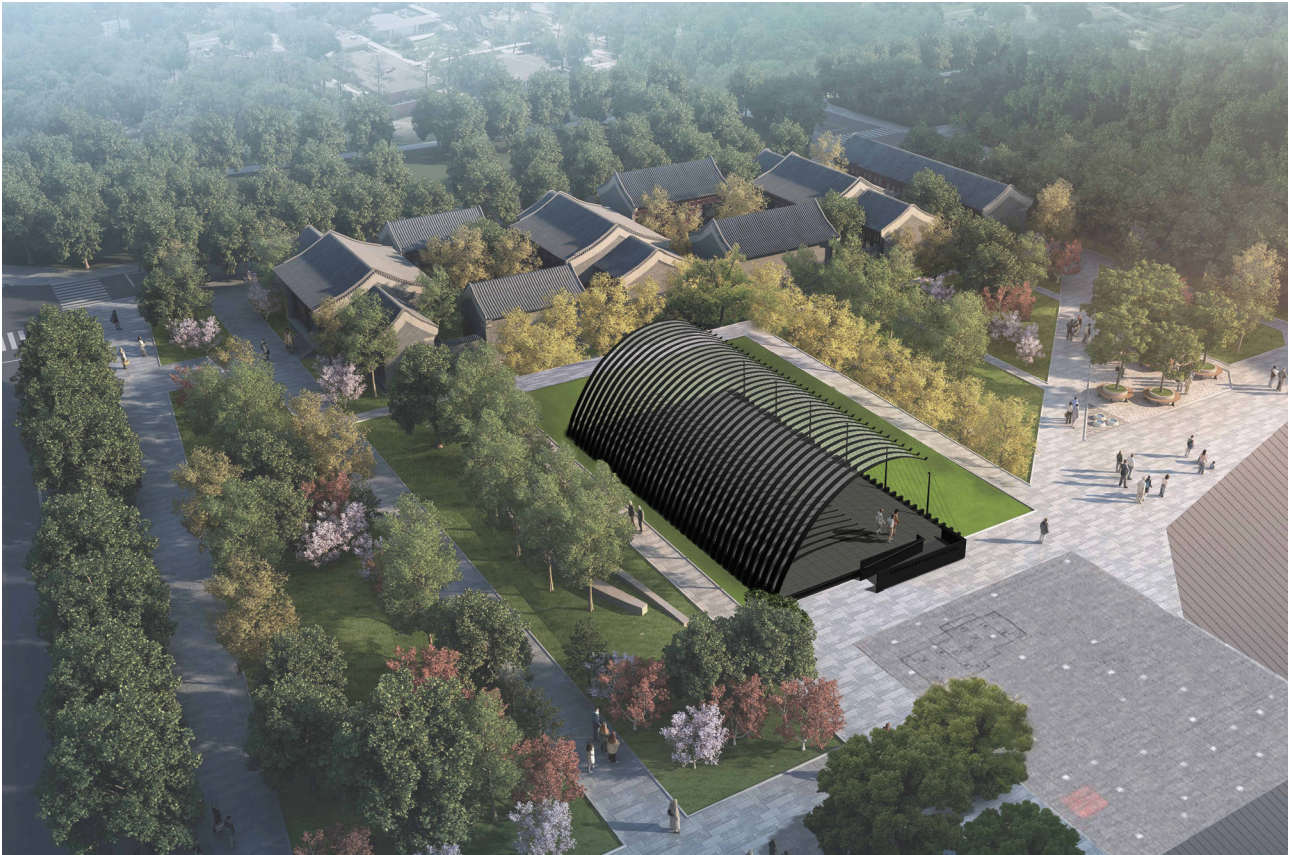
Featuring bold planes and dynamic geometry, this year's offering (June 15 to October 7) will play host to the summer's experimental Park Nights series, Friday evening late and live performances, as well as the Radical Kitchen talks and picnics programme. Intertwining the vibrant characteristics of domestic Mexican architecture with British history and raw materials, Escobedo draws influence from a background rooted in urban design. “When we decided to use a typical roof as the basic unit for the Pavilion walls, it became a question of how to

leverage its form and texture to achieve a result that was both light enough to permit a sense of the surrounding area, and dense enough to achieve the desired atmosphere for the interior,” she notes.

Placing heavy emphasis on the Prime Meridian Line located at London's Royal Observatory, the angled walls and dark concrete floors are offset by the light-reflecting qualities of water. “Light and shadow are such a crucial consideration in Mexican architecture,” states Escobedo, “I'm especially interested in taking materials that are normally understood as commonplace, or even banal, and trying to elevate them into something more.”



**ABOVE AND BELOW** The inaugural Beijing pavilion is close to the Forbidden City; Liu's design, while contemporary, is respectful of its historic neighbours



Photos: Jiakun Architects





Sichuan-based architect Liu Jiakun

Traditionally a pavilion commission has been a way to showcase the work of an individual or design team yet to complete a building in England, but 2018 sees the project take an intercontinental leap with a collaboration between Serpentine Galleries and WF CENTRAL, a mixed retail development in Beijing's Wangfujing district. The inaugural Beijing pavilion will welcome members of the public from this month. Set on the sprawling outdoor lawns of The Green at WF CENTRAL, the site lies close to China's Forbidden City. This proximity is a factor to which Chinese architectural practice Jiakun Architects has given careful consideration throughout the design process, ensuring history and tradition meld seamlessly with contemporary elements at every stage.

"When I need to design near a symbolic Chinese location like Wangfujing in Beijing, I hope [to look beyond] superficial Chinese symbols, instead demonstrating a more internal oriental consciousness," explains lead architect Liu Jiakun. "Of course, in addition to some abstract and professional parts, there is also straightforward expression. For instance, the co-existence and contrast of new steel arched structures and ancient *jinzhuan* [imperial yellow tiling], which was used as flooring within the Imperial Palace in ancient China."

The seminal project presented an opportunity for Liu to experiment with innovative design elements. Drawing inspiration from the traditional notion of *junzi* (a term used to signify gentlemanliness and the pursuit of an exemplary moral standard), the dynamic structure reflects the flexing bow of an archer, as noted in the *Analects of Confucius*. Combining sleek curves with rigid lines, the pavilion elucidates a constant yet profound physical battle.

"In this project, we use a bow structure – this is a brand-new kind of structure used to express the theme of 'force'. Force is shapeless but exists everywhere. It shapes the world. How do you treat force? Fight against it? Comply with it? Take advantage of it?" asks Liu. "Professionals working in architecture may focus on this new structure and raise some discussions, critique it or [note its] inspirations. As for the general public? Some people may see an open public space, others may just say this is a giant shed – some people [have] already said so."

Be it a source of inspiration or simply a 'giant shed', Beijing's latest architectural addition will be a bold sight to behold. As for whether this international summer pavilion is set to become an annual commission? Only time will tell. ■

[serpentinegalleries.org](http://serpentinegalleries.org)