

through a glass brightly

Park Pavilion

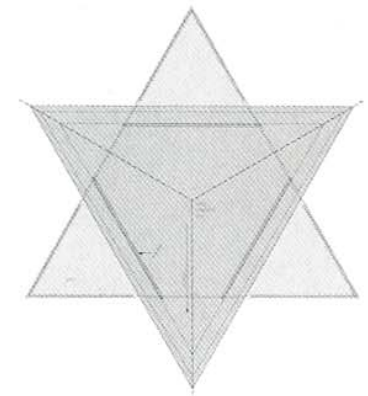
Hamburg, Germany 1999

And8 Architekten with Dan Graham

Glass pavilions do not garner much attention anymore. We have become somewhat inured to the wonders of transparency. But somehow this changes, as with our perception of many materials, when the scale is reduced to something roughly human in size. When New York artist Dan Graham, working with architects And8, was asked to create something for a public park in Hamburg, he had several factors to consider and potentially to compete with. Firstly, there was the precious greenery of the park itself, providing respite from the hard urbanscape. Secondly, the River Alster flowing majestically past, and, finally, the steel-and-glass office blocks that dominate so much of the city's visual impression.

The resulting pavilion is both sculptural and practical, fully realized and iconic. The glass, as in many a riverside setting, helps to refer and relate to the reflective surface of the body of water moving inexorably past. In combination with the steel framing, it also imitates the materials of the nearby office towers. But in taking those materials and focusing them down to a diminutive scale, the artist and architects made them suddenly human. The pavilion becomes an accessible and apprehendable object, something that can be owned by a single person for a moment.

Once inside, the visitor can appreciate the views of the surrounding park and trees, the movement of the river and the colour of the sky, while also experiencing



roof elevation



entrance level

enclosure. 'My pavilions are architecturally usable spaces,' says Graham, 'temporary outdoor shelters in an Arcadian tradition.' Here, the shelter is both arcadian and urbane.

There is symbolism, too, beyond the material references. The arrangement of two equilateral triangles, one imposed upon the other, alludes to both Judaism and Islam. Since light has great symbolic and

metaphoric value in both faiths – indeed, in most of the world's known religions – the little chamber works as a sort of offering for the experience of peaceful contemplation, closed off to the noise of the world, and perhaps encouraging the hope of illumination.