



A SECRET GARDEN IN LONDON

Words: KARAH BYRNS

Photos: GIORGIO DE VECCHI



Renowned Swiss architect Peter Zumthor and Italian master of light Mario Nanni gave the busy British capital an introspective escape for the summer

Peter Zumthor, the Swiss architect called quite simply "god" by some of his architectural contemporaries, won the honor of being the architect appointed to mount the much-awaited Serpentine Pavilion, the contemporary design installation hosted every year for the past decade in London's Hyde Park. Every summer, London welcomes a new architect to design the Serpentine Pavilion, nestled in the Kensington Gardens of Hyde Park. The pavilion is a temporary structure erected to be an engaging contemporary design space that doubles as a garden teahouse and place to take shelter from the city's frequent summer showers.

Perhaps the most difficult part of this task is the lack of any restraints. Architects are free to pursue their wildest dreams, and last year's 2010 pavilion designed by award-winning French architect Jean

Nouvel did just that, taking park-goers into a bright red, open-air "sun machine" where they could play frisbee, ping pong, and chess, or just chill out and lounge in the sun in a red hammock. "I want it to be a little place of warmth and delight," said Nouvel at the time, pleased with the zany result that he felt represented "architecture on holiday".

Zumthor's minimalist interpretation of the pavilion in 2011 brought a darker, more introspective twist. In his version, the pavilion construction consisted of a lightweight timber frame, sheathed in black idenden and hessian scrim to protect it from the elements. The resulting jet black box rose up from the grass, passively discrete. Its shadowy inner pathways all led back to a calm, central garden to create a meditative interior space where one can ponder the natural architecture of the plant world and absorb the silence of flowers growing, sun shining, and clouds passing. On a bright day, the black box brought about a stark contrast with the brilliant green grass and blue skies. On gray days, the experience bordered on what it would be like →



LIGHT MEETS PUBLIC ART

Words: KARAH BYRNS

BEIRUT'S COMING ENTERTAINMENT CENTER IS ABOUT TO LIGHT UP THE SOUKS, IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE



Architecture defines the form of space, creating permanent structures that remain rooted to the ground. Light, on the other hand, travels through the air, temporary and impossible to touch, yet able to touch our minds and shape our moods. Light illuminates hidden angles and spaces, transforming the physical into something magical.

It is perhaps for this reason that Beirut's most state-of-the-art entertainment complex soon to arrive in the Beirut Souks will be unveiling a contemporary form of cutting edge light design when it opens its doors at the end of this year. This entertainment complex that will be part of the North Souks will include a 14-screen aboveground movie theater that will be flanked by generous lounges and concession areas, a multimedia, retail and entertainment zone, international restaurants, an arcade, and a pedestrian walkway that will link up Allenby and Trablous streets.

To bring the entertainment center and its cinemas truly to life, Lebanese light designer Maurice Asso of the local light design firm Highlights will be teaming up with Italian light design house Viabizzuno and internationally acclaimed light designer Mario Nanni. Nanni is the creative genius behind the LIV – or variable-image light bulb - that makes projection light installations possible on a grand scale, casting colorful and detailed images upon the length of a high interior wall or exterior façade. His work can be seen in homes, offices, museums, public squares, and even retail showrooms, such as several Giorgio Armani stores. Together with Nanni, Asso will be transforming Beirut's newest entertainment complex into an emotional experience in light and design. He will quite literally be taking the magic of the movies off of the screen and bringing the spectacle of light into the space itself.

This year, the bold project was chosen to be presented at the 2nd annual Viabizzuno Worldwide Light Congress as a special feature from the Middle East. In an exclusive interview with Le Cercle, Nanni revealed that this choice was as much about the project's design as the people who will appreciate it: "We particularly wanted to pay tribute to a Mediterranean country like Lebanon, where the love of architecture and, more generally, design is very strong." *Grazie.*

