

# A10



#23  
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## Start

- Academy of Arts, Tallinn
- Hotel, Belgrade
- Office campus, Istanbul
- Mobile performance venue, Oslo
- Office building, Bacău

## Ready

- Shopping mall, Lausanne
- Football stadium, Maribor
- Villa, Černošice
- Kindergarten, Tartu
- Bar pavilion, Porto
- Motel, Moscow
- Town hall, Sant Cugat
- Treetop walkway, Kew Gardens
- Water filtration plant, St. Erasmo Island
- Church, Jyllinge

## &

- Interview: 'Local activists' Helen & Hard
- Beyond building: architecture in the age of post-production
- Architectural tour guide of Hamburg
- Out of obscurity: Vjenceslav Richter's Yugoslav pavilion for Expo 58, Brussels

## Section:

**Designing with light**

## Untypically Finnish

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## Bar pavilion, Porto

*By readdressing the structural role of skin, Menos é Mais reinterpret the latest fad in their own terms.*

PORTUGAL — TEXT: PEDRO GADANHÓ, PHOTOGRAPHY: FERNANDO GUERRA

It may seem odd to speak of trends and fads when faced with an architecture that pursues some idea of permanence. But even in things permanent, trends and fads do affect the way we look at current possibilities for achieving some sort of enduring statement.

For a start, when an architectural office calls itself 'Less is More' (Menos é Mais) we can immediately recognize a trend that, ever

since Mies van der Rohe coined the aphorism, has been deeply ingrained in large sections of architectural practice. But even among the most zealous followers of this ever-trendy declaration of style, fads may determine that the idealistic goal is pursued in slightly different manner over time.

Throughout an illustrative succession of pavilion bars on the historical riverside of their native town of Porto, Cristina Guedes

and Francisco Vieira de Campos have been keen to use the same programme over and over again to explore the Miesian proposition that 'Less is More' in very different ways. In 1993-1994, fresh from the Oporto School of Architecture, the model for their Café do Cais was as Miesian as you can get: two elegant slabs, thin structural elements, the precariousness of the programme compensated by a timeless sophistication of transparency and crafted detail. The fad here was that of minimalism's rebirth and, as such, the intrusion of a slightly protruding black box was a fashionable and inventive homage to the American sculptor Donald Judd.

A few years later programme and site were revisited but in the meantime architectural and artistic inspiration had undergone the impact of evolving trends and fads. In

the bars Guedes + De Campos realized on the opposite bank of the River Douro (1999-2000), Dan Graham was now the inspiration for a more conceptual play on transparency. And although the structural challenge was still both Miesian and Juddian in nature – to achieve the largest possible span with a minimum slab section, to achieve an enduring and archetypal 'box quality' – architectural expression was now slightly closer to design trends that announced a return to the curvy Sixties and Seventies.

Finally, in 2008 the office built a third bar pavilion, right alongside the previous ones, which clearly suggests that yet another fad is affecting the heroic course of recent architectural history.

Architecture substitutes art as a trendy reference for cultural production and fads →

↓ The structure spans 27 metres.





← Entrance area



← Rear facade

**(Bar pavilion, Porto)**

born in the architectural field itself now allow for old tectonic problems to be resolved in a new fashion. As such, the very same programme, volume, site, demands and architectural intentions may now reclaim a new form of minimal effort through which the issue of the elegant, ever-fashionable lengthy free span can be readdressed.

As has happened in so many buildings of the last decade, the skin itself acquires a structural role, while simultaneously generating an architectural expression that re-approximates ornament. And in the same vein, the 20th century mass-construction ideology triggered by Corbusier's Maison Domino will give way to a tactile and joyful approach to the once straight and opaque concrete slab.

Out go Mies, Loos and Corbu in one single breath and in comes Toyo Ito in determining the current craze in trendy tectonic play. Indeed, ever since Ito's Serpentine Pavilion not many walls in the smart architecture of our day were left to their traditional, straight-forward bearings. Guedes + De Campos, however, did not fall straightaway for the oblique geometries recommended by the fad of the moment and, remaining faithful to their neo-modernist motto, opted instead for the classic

and timeless qualities of the simple honeycomb structure.

If in their previous building for a metal industrial unit they had used such structural elements purely as cladding, now the skin has become a light and playful skeleton. With the help of one of the few Portuguese masters of steel structure – the engineer Mota Freitas – the architects achieved a 27-metre span with a 5 mm-thick metal honeycomb structure only 30 cm deep. Simultaneously, however, they created a rich and intricate form of transparency that, in contrast to their previous designs, floods the interior space with an intense texture of light and shadow.

With its simple but daring tectonic feat, this small steel and glass pavilion adds its own set of qualities to the profound and challenging ambiguity that permeates the relationship between structure and surface in so much interesting recent architecture. Guedes + De Campos may have taken on board the latest fad, but they have done so on their own terms. ←

**BAR PAVILION, 2007–2008**

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