

A Gallery of Culture in Our Times:
Julia Peyton-Jones and the Serpentine Pavilions

by

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Abstract

This essay interrogates the strategies and philosophies of Julia Peyton-Jones, the Director of the Serpentine Galleries in London, England and creator of the Serpentine Pavilion exhibition, to examine how the ideas and operations of spectacle in the contemporary art world can act as constructive social devices. Leftist and postmodern theorists have long interpreted spectacle negatively because of its associations with advanced capitalism and hyper-consumerism. This research offers an alternative interpretation of the spectacular. It identifies the remarkable and the astonishing as qualities of the spectacle, and argues that these effects benefit society in the context of the cultural realm.

This paper foregrounds Peyton-Jones' methods as a cultural agent and examines her strategic use of spectacle to actualize her altruistic culture agenda. The interest here is how Peyton-Jones uses the idea and power of spectacle to promote contemporary architecture.

The 2013 pavilion by Sou Fujimoto is used as the case study for considering the role of the spectacle here. Fujimoto's pavilion was constructed as a latticework of slender white steel rods forming an asymmetrical ring. Deemed a digital cloud, it was experienced as aesthetically nebulous and ethereal. The physical structure, the circumstances of its conception and its realization can be read as a material embodiment of contemporary cultural production and the art world in which it circulates and is assessed. This research repositions the idea of the spectacle in culture to show that it is a productive force in the world of contemporary art.

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Introduction

Critiques of spectacle in the cultural realm often take an overtly political approach. In the art world, spectacle is considered suspect because of its associations with manipulation and power. Many postmodernist theorists deride the binary of culture and spectacle as a pairing that is borne out of capitalism and hyper-consumerism. This type of reproachful stance is a limited view of spectacle that precludes alternative understandings. Redefining the theories on spectacle argued by others, including political theorist Guy Debord (founding member of The Situationist International) in *The Society of the Spectacle*, this research moves beyond such limited critical positions to consider this sensory modality as a constructive influence in the contemporary art world. To this end, this paper considers the idea of spectacle as demonstrated in the architecture and circumstances of the Serpentine Pavilion commission. In particular, the 2013 pavilion by Sou Fujimoto is read as a representation of the dynamics and social character of the high-end art world. This examination argues that Peyton-Jones, the creator of the pavilion series, embraces the phenomenon of spectacle, leveraging it in the Serpentine pavilion project to realize her goal of making contemporary cultural experiences available for everyone. This work elucidates how her stance is achieved through shrewd use of spectacle as a contemporary art world strategy.

Used as an aesthetic and ideological term, 'spectacle' is most often associated with power and display. These features are frequently connected with contemporary culture and occur extensively in the burgeoning global art world. The

aesthetic character of the spectacular is typically seductive, exaggerated in scale, and features intensified imagery and symbolism. Always operating in the realm of the sensorial, spectacles and spectacular things can incorporate light, sound and carefully planned haptic effects that range from the dazzling to the daunting. Spectacular characteristics like these are often incorporated in contemporary artworks. The staging, display and inaugurations of art shows and exhibits are often associated with lavish parties and extraordinary entertainment. These types of exaggerated visual and social phenomena have led to the concept of ‘culture as spectacle’¹ in the international art economy.

Debord and other leftist or Marxist theorists such as Fredric Jameson and Jean-Francois Lyotard have sought to explain the character of contemporary life by setting the origins of spectacle squarely in the cycle of capitalism. Their critiques focus on how spectacle in capitalism’s consumerist society leads culture into servicing capitalism’s ideology. They consider the ubiquitous nature of spectacle as reductive and a force that leads to “transformation of reality into images.”² Debord suggests that social relations are mediated by images and he correlates alienation in social relationships with the prevailing role of spectacle in society.³ Put another way: the spectacle in the contemporary art world is a pervasive feature of the complex matrix of globalized art culture. Spectacle in the international art world abounds, and as the globalization of the art market increases, it is important to understand more precisely the role spectacle plays in contemporary culture. Using

¹ Melanie Townsend, ed., *Beyond The Box: Diverging Curatorial Practices* (Alberta: Banff Centre Press, 2003), 65.

² Greg Lambert and Victor. E. Taylor, *Jean-Francois Lyotard: Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 134.

³ Guy Debord, *The Society Of The Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books,1995),12.

the pavilion series and the 2013 Serpentine pavilion (referred here as the Fujimoto pavilion) this research examines how Peyton-Jones employs the genre of spectacle in her cultural mission to forward contemporary architecture.

This discussion re-contextualizes spectacle by elaborating wonderment's power as a social agent. Interrogating Peyton-Jones' work with the spectacular, this essay looks at the spectacle's experiential element as an asset. I argue that spectacle can lift culture beyond the banal, enhance public interest, enliven the experience of art and produce visceral engagement with contemporary architecture. Debord characterizes the spectacle as a singular subsuming entity, but this work suggests that spectacle is a term that should be pluralized to account for the multi-faceted experiences it evokes in the art world.

The original Serpentine Gallery was built in 1934 in Kensington Garden in Hyde Park in London as a tea pavilion. It was converted to an exhibition venue for contemporary and modern art in 1970. In 1991, Peyton-Jones became the gallery's director. In 2000 she established the architectural commission for a temporary summer pavilion to be designed by a notable international architect or design team. Each invitee creates a summer pavilion located in Hyde Park, adjacent to the gallery. Over the years, architects such as Zaha Hadid, Frank Gehry and Jean Nouvel have designed structure of visual and technical complexity. In each case, the critics and public have acknowledged the power of the pavilion architecture to communicate ideas and to serve the work of promoting art. The selection in 2013 of award-winning architect Sou Fujimoto from Tokyo, Japan continues and

exemplifies Peyton-Jones' strategic employment of renowned international architects in her work of cultural advocacy.

Fujimoto's white, lattice pavilion has been referenced extensively as a "cloud," and widely lauded as "magical." It embodies ideas of architectural spectacle, and has evoked social spectacle during its time of operation. This research looks at the structure itself as well as at its use as a social container entangled with popular culture and consumer industries.

American sociologist Howard Becker's work is used as a framework to analyze the architectural series, as well as the case study and its circumstances. He offers a pragmatic view of what he calls "Art Worlds," likening their operations to the mechanics in any industry.⁴ Becker defines cultural products as items produced and consumed through a web of cooperative activity and collective actions. He unravels the intertwined networks of cultural production and emphasizes the importance of reputation in the art world. His work provides an entry into the influential role of reputation and its extreme manifestation in the fetishization of celebrity. Celebrity is a prevalent aspect of the contemporary social construct, and Peyton-Jones uses it to attain her cultural mandate.

Analyzing the Fujimoto pavilion as a case study requires contending with the building's short four month life span (from June 8th to October 20th 2013) and the scarcity of published works and coverage. Lack of printed material about the design, construction and reception of the pavilion required that information be obtained primarily from internet sources. These fall into two sectors: mass market coverage and scholarly reports. This challenge situates the research in contemporary

⁴ Howard Becker, *Art Worlds* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 11.

times marked by online networked information sources, images and mediated representation. This provides a view of the pavilion exhibit, its cultural events and the resulting discourse that reflects the information strand in globalization.

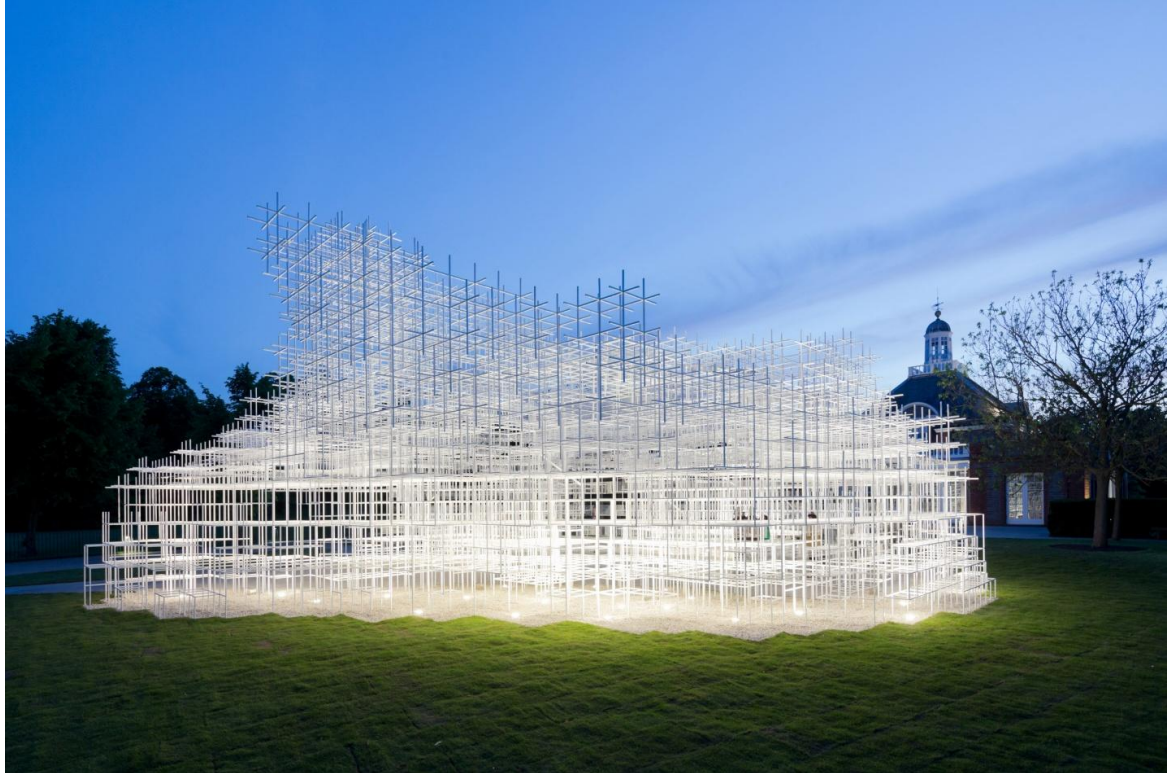


Figure 1
Designed by Sou Fujimoto
© Sou Fujimoto Architects
Image © 2013 Iwan Baan

Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2013

<http://www.serpentinegalleries.org/about/press/2013/06/exhibitions/serpentine-gallery-pavilion-2013-designed-sou-fujimoto-8-june-20-october>

I

From its unveiling, critical and popular reactions to Fujimoto's design focused on its aesthetic power. "It is a dazzling, Tron-like landscape of infinite white lines," wrote Oliver Wainwright in the Guardian, June 4, 2013. In recapping various online reports about the pavilion, Rory Scott of ArchDaily focused on the shared wonder generated by Fujimoto's ethereal structure. "It's ineffably light and seductively complex," proclaimed Edwin Heathcote of the Financial Times and offered that it is "a magical realization of an architect's first sketch." It represented "a beautiful mystery of light, space and geometry" in the words of Jay Merrick of The Independent.⁵ Indeed, from February 24th 2013 well through the summer, press reports, architectural reviews, the blogosphere and social media sites were filled with coverage that used language portraying a sense of wonder and the structure's ability to captivate. Words such as 'weightless' and 'celestial' were used to describe and capture the character of the building.⁶ The Independent, a daily with mass circulation and a decidedly progressive sensibility exclaimed how the pavilion "hits" what it called the "delight button," and did so "with great panache." The writers at Building Design declared that the building was "almost dreamlike one of the more intriguing examples of this annual architecture-meets-sculpture

⁵ "Fujimoto's Serpentine Pavilion Receives High Praise from Critics," ArchDaily, by Rory Scott, June 11, 2013, <http://www.archdaily.com/?p=385840>.

⁶ "17 Miles of Steel: Sou Fujimoto's Serpentine Pavilion is a Hit in London," BLOUINARTINFO, Art Fair Editions, Section: Object Lesson Architecture & Design News, by Janelle Zara, June 4, 2013, <http://blogs.artinfo.com/objectlessons/2013/06/04/17-miles-of-steel-sou-fujimotos-serpentine-pavilion-is-a-hit-in-london/>.

commission.”⁷ Janelle Zara of ARTINFO proclaimed: “ladies and gentleman, it’s a hit.”⁸

The range of superlative descriptors of wonderment found in the media and expressing enthusiastic and affirmative acceptance are referencing the compelling spectacle of the thirteenth Serpentine Gallery Pavilion. Architect Sou Fujimoto himself described the design as a unique combination of elements stated that “a new form of environment will be created.” Envisioning the pavilion’s environment as a place where “the natural and the man-made merge,” Fujimoto’s conception of the pavilion was; neither “solely architectural nor solely natural.” Rather, it was to be “but a unique meeting of the two.” Explaining his concept in detail he stated:

The Pavilion will be a delicate, three-dimensional structure, each unit of which will be composed of fine steel bars. It will form a semi-transparent, irregular ring; simultaneously protecting visitors from the elements while allowing them to remain part of the landscape. The delicate quality of the structure, enhanced by its semi-transparency, will create a geometric, cloud-like form, as if it were mist rising from the undulations of the park. From certain vantage points, the Pavilion will appear to merge with the classical structure of the Serpentine Gallery, with visitors suspended in space.”⁹

Fujimoto’s design intent emphasizes an ephemeral aesthetic attained through delicate and see-through elements.

In late May 2013, the images of the pavilion started to surface on the web.

Designboom, a heavily subscribed online architectural magazine, revealed the on-going construction process in a series of photographs. On May 21, 2013

Designboom showed the raw excavation site in the park and a crane lowering a pre-

⁷ “17 Miles of Steel: Sou Fujimoto’s Serpentine Pavilion is a Hit in London,” BLOUINARTINFO, Art Fair Editions, by Janelle Zara, June 4, 2013, <http://blogs.artinfo.com/objectlesson/2013/06/04/17-miles-of-steel-sou-fujimotos-serpentine-pavilion-is-a-hit-in-london/>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ “Sou Fujimoto to design the 2013 Serpentine Gallery Pavilion,” ArchDaily, by David Basulto, Feb 14, 2013, <http://www.archdaily.com/332103/sou-fujimoto-to-design-the-2013-serpentine-gallery-pavilion/>.

assembled, un-even section of white steel gridding onto the cement foundation . The sequence of images that follow show section upon section of gridding being stacked ever higher into an irregular shaped mass as Fujimoto had described.¹⁰ A few weeks later on Tuesday June 4th the media had an advanced look at the Fujimoto pavilion and the flurry of reviews was consistently positive.

Fujimoto’s highly praised design incorporated many recognizable trademarks that are typical to his larger body of work. He states that his process is about “designing structures that are ‘in between’ opposing concepts such as nature and architecture.”¹¹ To achieve a pavilion “that blurs the boundaries of natural and artificiality,”¹² Fujimoto created a three hundred and fifty-seven square meter white grid frame made out of 20mm thick square steel rods configured in 400mm cubes. Comprised of a staggering twenty-seven thousand slender pieces of steel, the grid work was configured into an uneven circular form with two entry ways. Fujimoto is known for designing structural elements that serve several functions; here he inserted glass panels into the grid. The tiered sections triple as steps, seating and a climbing frame. The interior remained united with the outdoors, as the grid allows the spectator’s gaze to connect out to the green of the park’s summer scenery and up to the sky above. The irregular interior void operates as a flexible space for the public to explore: it houses the gallery’s program of social and educational events

¹⁰ “Serpentine Pavilion 2013 by Sou Fujimoto Nears Completion,” designboom, by Danny Hudson, May 21, 2013, Designboom, Newsletter <http://www.designboom.com/architecture/serpentine-pavilion-2013-by-sou-fujimoto-nears-completion/>.

¹¹ “Every Kind of Architectural Definition Has an In-Between Space,” Dezeen Limited, by Ben Hobson, October 28, 2013, <http://www.dezeen.com/2013/10/28/movie-sou-fujimoto-structures-between-nature-architecture/>.

¹² “Sou Fujimoto’s Serpentine Gallery Pavilion Opens,” designboom, by Andrea Chin, June 4, 2013, accessed November 22, 2013 <http://www.designboom.com/architecture/sou-fujimoteos-serpentine-gallery-avilion-opens/>.

and functions as a casual café space. The choice of steel scaffolding with its uninterrupted sight lines uniquely integrates the man-made form into the park setting providing visual connections to the natural surroundings from all angles. As Fujimoto predicted, the solid structure appears transparent, like an illusionary mist.

The most dramatic views of the pavilion were realized in changing light levels. In bright sun the space's stark white frame contrasts against the rich green of the park, and on cloudy days the white of the grid softens and appears to meld into the surrounding hazy sky. An extraordinary visual effect is produced at night by the in-ground light fixtures that are set around the structure's perimeter. The lights theatrically illuminate the frame,¹³ creating an intense ethereal luminosity that sets the form aglow. Lit like this, the pavilion mysteriously levitates like a mirage against the dark park setting. Ultimately the structure is a form and also the form dematerialized.

The structure appeared simultaneously as a pavilion and as merely an atmospheric illusion. In June 6, 2013, Fujimoto stated: "the whole shape is rather organic, like a cloud. At the same time, the whole thing is made by really sharp industrial materials."¹⁴ The media coverage on the pavilion confirms Fujimoto's goal of providing an architecture that evokes contrasts. A BBC news report summarized several press releases that highlight the pavilion as seductive, delicate and substantial, hard-edged and softly indistinct, and a seductive maze of

¹³ "2013 Serpentine Gallery Pavilion," Architectural Lighting, by Elizabeth Donoff, accessed November 22, 2103, <http://www.archlighting.com/cultural-projects/2013-serpentine-gallery-pavilion.aspx>.

¹⁴ "Japanese Architect Fujimoto Designs Serpentine's 2013 Summer Pavilion," The Japan Times News, June 6, 2013, www.japantimes.co.jp/news.

perspectives.¹⁵ The clash between the organic and the industrial creates a visual tension that is at once a subtle and complex.

Fujimoto's pavilion featured material and conceptual juxtapositions that were in keeping with both his design philosophy and the history of pavilion aesthetics. Pavilions' typology has historically been associated with spaces of display marked by concentrated aesthetics. It aims to be innovative: the tradition of unpredictability is associated with this building type.¹⁶ The Fujimoto pavilion lacks surface planes, traditional materials or recognizable forms. Using an unrecognizable building vocabulary, he transforms typical architectural language into an unexpected visual that is intended to confuse the senses. The consistent descriptions of the Fujimoto pavilion as a cloud are apt, and signal that the object operates in the realm of the unexpected on tangible and intangible levels. The pavilion's confluence of visual, somatic and conceptual aspects produces an effect that situates Fujimoto's creation in its own otherworldly and wonder-inspiring space. Creating the quietly astonishing marvel of a cloud, the work instantly operated in the realm of the spectacular.

Indeed, a review of the numerous articles from the architectural and mainstream press offer the opportunity to gain a sense of ideas and feelings about the Fujimoto pavilion, but much public attention was also occurring online on social websites. The popular photo-sharing site Instagram has thousands of photos uploaded that capture the Fujimoto pavilion in a myriad of circumstances. Shots include the

¹⁵ "'Seductive' Serpentine Pavilion," BBC News, Entertainment & Arts, June 5, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-22779497>.

¹⁶ "The Serpentine Gallery 2007 Again," Dezeen, by Marcus Fairs, August 23, 2007, <http://www.dezeen.com/2007/08/23/serpentine-gallery-pavilion-2007-again/>.

structure in every light setting; the pavilion is shown encircled by a rainbow and also awash in intense colored flood lights during evening parties. The images show a range of humanity of varying ethnicities and ages, singles, couples, families, and groups sitting or climbing the pavilion's tiered levels to the very top. The photos capture people both in quiet activities and revelry. The pavilion is pictured during many types of events: fashion shows, entertainment, and lectures. Many of the Instagram postings are changed to black and white or sepia, and in some cases, captions state the viewer's impressions, which range from "Beautifully Complicated" to "Caging the Sun." Strikingly, the tags frequently feature adjectives like 'stunning' and 'beautiful': the public endorsed the building's surprising and impressive aesthetic and the sense of pleasure it afforded.

Before the removal of the Fujimoto pavilion from Hyde Park in October 2013, very little popular or scholarly press coverage appeared in the media about its inevitable demolition. Instagram postings continued, however, and the photo's tags noted that it will be "sadly gone too soon."¹⁷ The public responses suggest an appreciation of the pavilion and an anticipated loss at the prospect of its removal. Overall, the extent and range of Instagram postings indicate that the Fujimoto pavilion activated public curiosity, a drive to share the creative work, and a desire to be seen with the unique, accessible form of contemporary architecture. The descriptions and sentiments common to the popular press, social media sites and scholarly reports imply that the Fujimoto pavilion had an impact: one that was spectacular, and that afforded a sense of wonder.

¹⁷ "Serpentine Pavilion by Sou Fujimoto," Instagram.com., <http://instagr.in/1/100329851>.

II

Compelling questions arise in connection with this spectacular architecture: what strategies afford a structure of this nature to come into being? How were these mechanisms formulated? Julia Peyton-Jones, describe as a “Mastermind”¹⁸ by Bernard Emie, launched the unique architectural series in 2000. Looking at Peyton-Jones’ background, philosophies, and strategies provides insight into the complexities and the successes of the pavilion project.

In 2013 – the same year the Fujimoto pavilion appeared on the international cultural scene - Peyton-Jones was awarded the prestigious *Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres*.¹⁹ Peyton-Jones’ abilities, and her dedication to the arts, had been recognized previously and often: in 1997 she was named Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Art. In 2003 she was made an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE).²⁰ In his speech at the 2013 World Economic Forum in Davos Switzerland, French Ambassador Bernard Emie spoke eloquently of Peyton-Jones’ many accomplishments. Speaking forcefully about Peyton-Jones’ goal to “create a model for a gallery of culture in our times” Emie acknowledged her success in creating the annual Serpentine Pavilion series. Calling her “the

¹⁸ “Speech by HE Bernard Emié, French Ambassador to the United Kingdom at the Ceremony to Award the Insignia of Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres to Julia Peyton-Jones et Hans-Ulrich Obrist Serpentine Gallery,” [ambafrance-uk.org](http://www.ambafrance-uk.org), 26 February 2013, http://www.ambafranceuk.org/IMG/pdf/Amba_S_26022013.pdf?5058/b455cf2d08b41f690fbcf6bc2936fba753eee5f4.

¹⁹ This award is the prestigious Order of Arts and letters from France to recipients in recognition of significant contributions for arts, literature, or the propagation of these fields.

²⁰ “Julia Peyton-Jones OBE,” Policy Review TV, Speakers Biography, accessed March 11, 2014, <http://www.policyreview.tv/speaker/1584.html>.

powerhouse behind the Serpentine’s success story” and recognized as the architect of the program of the summer pavilions, Emie provided a picture of her indomitable influence. He lauded her “brilliant intuition” – specifically, her insight that architectural photos and drawings lack the visceral engagement of three dimensional spaces. He commended Peyton-Jones for heightening public appreciation for contemporary architecture. Highlighting the outcomes of her commission, Emie stated: “by inventing this demanding and playful format, you enabled thousands of people to experience the ‘elevation of the spirit’ produced by a skillfully-designed structure.”²¹ Most significantly, he praised Peyton-Jones for maintaining free entry to the approximately million guests who visit the galleries annually. Her approach and cultural vision, he remarked, is reflected in her motto ‘art for all.’²²

When Peyton-Jones became the director of Serpentine Gallery she stated that she was “determined to continue the tradition of the gallery being a meeting place for contemporary arts, but a place “necessary to everybody, not just the art world’.”²³ She has also expressed her thinking about her role at the gallery, offering insights as to character an ethical positioning: “To lead a public institution” she explained, one must stay apolitical. But I am deeply committed to art for all.”²⁴ Here, Peyton-Jones’ espoused a-political stance is underpinned by her altruistic vision that considers art an imperative for all of society, not just for those from the art world.

²¹ “Speech by HE Bernard Emie, French Ambassador to the United Kingdom at the Ceremony to Award the Insignia of Chevalier des Arts et des lettres to Julia Peyton-Jones et Hans-Ulrich Obrist Serpentine Gallery,” ambafrance-uk.org., 26 February 2013, http://www.ambaranceuk.org/IMG/pdf/Amba_S26022013.pdf?5058/b455cf2d08b41f690fbcf6bc2936fba753eee5f4.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ “The Inventory: Julia Peyton-Jones,” FT Magazine, by Hester Lacey, March 4, 2011, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/2/906b8e3c-4472-11e0-931d-00144feab49a.html#axzz30V7fwkBZ>.

Indeed, Peyton-Jones' own artistic background and experiences must be seen as powerful, contributing factors in her philosophical stance and her commitment to the promotion and dissemination of contemporary art. Peyton-Jones was born in 1952 and raised in Victoria, London and her family had long associations with and connections to art. Her great-grandmother was a painter and her grandfather made his career as an art historian.²⁵ Her education and career path-situated-in the throes of the late counter-culture revolutions of the 1960's and the era's populist arguments for social action and democratic-change followed her family's artistic bent. In the mid 70's she studied at the Royal College of Arts, and she focused on painting. She had a moderately successful studio practice for about ten years she ran a commercial gallery in Wapping, England. In 1988, she left the world of selling art and became a curator in the Exhibitions department at the Hayward Gallery, a high profile and progressive public art institution closely associated with the Arts Council of England.²⁶ Peyton-Jones time at the Hayward was important in the shaping of her thinking about art and the public realm. Not only did it place her firmly in the pressured, public world of cultural stewardship, but it gave her access to prominent curators and public officials. Indeed, when asked about influences in her life, Peyton-Jones speaks highly about her two most important mentors in the arts, or the people she refers to as her "art world parents." The first, Joanna Drew, served as director of Hayward Gallery during Peyton-Jones tenure and a member of the Arts Council whom she describes as "queen of the arts." The second is David

²⁵ "The Inventory: Julia Peyton-Jones," FT Magazine, by Hester Lacey, March 4, 2011, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/2/906b8e3c-4472-11e0-931d-00144feab49a.html#axzz30V7fwkBZ>.

²⁶ "Interview: Cool, Calm Director," The Independent, by John Walsh, December 13, 1997, <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/interview-cool-calm-collector-1288560.html>.

Sylvester is a respected, curator, critic and a trustee of the Serpentine Gallery.²⁷

Both these individuals were highly influential in her learning process (a fact she is always happy to share). Accordingly Peyton-Jones' background and thinking about culture can be to represent the rich confluence of personal history and public experience. Her work as the director of the Serpentine Pavilion is the culmination of influential and effecting forces.

Peyton-Jones has definite philosophies that define her work in the cultural arena. She insisted that she is not driven by making money and instead contextualizes her ethics as public servitude, stating "I started as a painter and come from that very old-fashioned notion of public service." Applying this notion to the Serpentine Galleries, she says: "above all, I want lots of people to come." She tells how she was shocked to hear people questioning whether Picasso had contributed to art in any meaningful way, and to be asked consistently in the 90's: "well, contemporary art, it's not really serious is it?"²⁸ Negative attitudes towards contemporary work set her on a focused mission. As she notes, "the opportunity I saw for us [The Serpentine Gallery] was to create an institution that had something to say – to exert some influence over that debate."²⁹ When Peyton-Jones became the Serpentine director she ambitiously re-invented the gallery. She transformed it from an artist-run gallery featuring local art to an institution with world-wide status by changing the mandate to feature legendary international artists such as Man Ray, Andy Warhol, Henry Moore, Damien Hirst and Jeff Koons. This thrust the venue and its

²⁷ "The Inventory: Julia Peyton-Jones, FT Magazine," by Hester Lacey, March 4, 2011, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/2/906b8e3c-4472-11e0-931d-00144feab49a.html#axzz2x1noHNbj>.

²⁸ "Julia Peyton-Jones," COS Stores, by Penny Martin, accessed February 11, 2014, http://www.cosstores.com/gb/Magazine/AW13Julia_Peyton_Jones.

²⁹ Ibid.

programming into the high-culture art world that prizes artists with international reputations whose works are highly remunerated. The Serpentine Galleries now comprises two buildings and the Serpentine Pavilion program. Colin Tweety, of *Arts & Business*, calls the Serpentine one of London's most 'dynamic and creative'³⁰ art venues; Mark Camley, Chief Executive of the Royal Parks describes the galleries as a 'cultural destination'.³¹

Clearly, however, for Peyton-Jones to turn the Serpentine Gallery into a noted cultural destination took considerable, specialized managerial skill and strategies. When Peyton-Jones was brought in as director, the gallery was a small, struggling art venue, in jeopardy of being closed down.³² Her background as an artist, involvement in a commercial gallery, work in a public art institution and the influence of her mentors gave Peyton-Jones a sound understanding of the major sectors of the art world community. She developed more nuanced expertise as curator/director at the Serpentine, and had a multiplicity of perspectives she could harness. To understand how Peyton-Jones has been able to achieve her accomplishments at the Serpentine, it is useful to consider how she leverages her unique blend of experience and exposure.

³⁰ "Serpentine Galleries Entertaining Brochure," Serpentine Galleries, accessed December 27, 2013, <http://www.serpentinegalleries.org/sites/default/files./SerpentineGalleryEntertainingEventsBrochure2014pressize.pdf>.

³¹ "A New Public Gallery: The Royal Parks and the Serpentine Gallery Agree to a New Venue," Art Daily, November 1, 2010, http://artdaily.com/news/42218/A-new-Public-Gallery--The-Royal-Parks-and-the-Serpentine-Gallery-Agree-to-New-Venue--#.UvKbL_siqK8.

³² "Faces to Watch In The Art World 8, Julia Peyton-Jones," The Independent, by Adrian Searle, August 15, 1995, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/faces-to-watch-in-the-art-world-8-julia-peytonjones-1596293.html>.

A number of experiences inspired Peyton-Jones to spearhead the pavilion project. The model for the series and its guidelines is built on two key elements; her previous involvement with outdoor art installations and commissioning of rapid response architectural solutions.³³ In 1992 Peyton-Jones commissioned an outdoor installation by Dan Graham and in 1997, she engaged five artists to create outdoor installations for the gallery while it was closed for renovations. She commissioned temporary structures in 1997, first a roof for the reopening of the gallery and a pavilion for the overflow of guest for a party that the gallery's patron, Diana Princess of Wales, was expected to attend.³⁴ Then another roof structure was commissioned for an event in 1999. In all cases the turnaround time was short and the budgets tight. However, despite limitations, the architects provided dynamic temporary solutions.³⁵ Peyton- Jones noted how commissioning outdoor work, especially architectural commissions, impacted her thinking. She explained: "it dawned on me that commissioning architecture in this way was truly exciting and it absolutely had to be part of the future of the Serpentine Gallery."³⁶ Peyton-Jones' industry-specific encounters inspired her to create the pavilion program.

Becker suggests creativity occurs within a web of interconnected participants and activities. His term 'art worlds' summarizes his theory that interdependent spheres are related by overlapping associations to particular types of work. He characterizes these varying arenas: "art worlds consist of all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that

³³ Philip Jodidio, *Serpentine Gallery Pavilions* (Germany: Taschen, 2011), 9-10.

³⁴ Diana Princess of Wales passed away on August 31, 1997 before the party she was slated to attend and the gallery delayed the event.

³⁵ Jodidio, *Serpentine Gallery Pavilions*, 9.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

world and perhaps others as well, define as art.”³⁷ Differentiating art worlds by the types of works produced and by those who contribute to the production and distribution of the artworks, Becker defines the people in the spheres as having varying levels of expertise ranging from integrated professionals to amateur.³⁸ The cultural works produced are assigned the status of art by those within that particular art world.³⁹

According to Becker’s theoretical framework, the Serpentine Galleries can be understood as a sector comprised of art-worldly professionals operating through shared interactions pertaining to the making of cultural works at the upper-end of the art market.⁴⁰ Peyton-Jones’ development of the pavilion commission borne out of influences in her art world exemplifies Becker’s model. This is evident in her pavilions guidelines. Short timelines with a focus on innovation drew directly from Peyton-Jones’ work on projects for installation art and short-term canopies. The guidelines incorporate constraints that explicitly spell out a rapid timeline: architects have six months from the receipt of the invitation to construct a 350 square-meter pavilion. Peyton-Jones acknowledges that the time restrictions provide a liberating format where architectural innovation can thrive.⁴¹ In polar opposition to complete buildings that often falls back on predictable conventions (or is hampered by extensive requirements such as plumbing or heating), the commission instead sets up what is fundamentally an architectural charrette intended to incite

³⁷ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 34.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 317.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 368.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 32-26.

⁴¹ Jodidio, *Serpentine Gallery Pavilion*, 10.

creativity. The program format leads to experimentation that condenses innovation and aesthetics into spectacular samples of contemporary architecture.⁴²

As Becker's theory suggests, Peyton-Jones' development of the pavilion program draws on her art world experience and network of professionals. However, she steps beyond his sector-specific version of art world organization. Peyton-Jones takes an expanded tact that can be likened to art historian and critic Terry Smith's broad view of cultural practice in the contemporary frame. His stance suggests there are diverse ways of being in the contemporary era which he describes as 'contemporaneity-of the multiple.'⁴³ Smith uses the term *contemporaneity* to explain the confluence of multiple current influences. He provides a metaphor of 'being in the river of time' to explain his view that there are multiple undercurrents of forces and changes occurring in contemporary life. Smith advises that these forces are of varying intensities—some evident, some emerging, others imperceptible—and we are constantly negotiate life among and between them.

Peyton-Jones negotiated between the high-end, fine arts discipline and the aligned but separate and pragmatic realm of architecture to realize the pavilion project. Incorporating the multiple influences gleaned from temporary structural projects she encountered at the gallery, Peyton-Jones established criteria with constrained time lines and minimal functional requirements for the architectural project. The commission format evokes a new cultural idiom of boundary-pushing

⁴² The 1999 roof structure for the Serpentine Gallery was an example of experimentation and innovation resulting from a short turn around. Designer Ron Arad created a unique and playful roof design made of ping-pong balls.

⁴³ "Art Theorist Terry Smith on His New Tome: Thinking Contemporary Curating," BlouinArtinfo, by Ori Gat, September, 18, 2012, <http://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/826550/art-theorist-terry-smith-on-his-new-tome-thinking-contemporary-curating>.

pavilion typology that is intensified to an art-installation-like entity. Her cross-sector art-architecture approach is transformative thinking that generated an original exhibition strategy. Art historian Philip Jodido confirms the Pavilion commission's innovative format as "the only architecture program of its type in the world."⁴⁴ As a sustained architectural mandate marked by short time frames it is an unprecedented, exhibition programming for a public art institute. The aggressive time lines for the architectural development captures the essence of the contemporary now (or what Smith calls contemporaneity) through marshalling of current conceptual thinking and bringing these timely but fleeting ideas quickly to reality. Here, the realization of an architect's thinking mirrors or emulates the principles and actions of the processes of rapid prototyping (mindful of differences in material, fabrication techniques and scale). Peyton-Jones' strategy provokes experimentation through immediacy, fostering affording architectural innovation like Fujimoto's unprecedented script of a spectacular architectural digital cloud. She moved outside the elite art sector, co-opting architecture in order to elevate public exposure and awareness to this form of material culture. Peyton-Jones' exhibition series contributes to her goal to "create a model for a gallery of culture in our times" by presenting a breadth of works that include an annual architectural creation that showcases up-to-the-minute contemporary creativity.

⁴⁴ Philip Jodido, "Summer at the Serpentine: Ten Years of Temporary Pavilions by Top Architects," Taschen, accessed November 11, 2013, http://www.taschen.com/pages/en/catalogue/architecture/new/06774/facts.Serpentine_gallery_pavilions.htm.

III

Peyton-Jones uses spectacle as a strategy to advance the pavilion project and draws on its nuanced and multi-faceted spectrum. Any definition of spectacle (which cites only its extraordinary characteristics: superlative visuals, grandeur of scale, arresting displays and affects of awe) risks overlooking the power of astonishment as an agent in social well-being. The success of this phenomenon can be seen in how it operates semiotically. As art historian Yanel Tuncel has argued in *Towards a Genealogy of Spectacle: Understanding Contemporary Spectacular Experiences*, the phenomena of spectacle with its multiple layers in depth can be better defined as being comprised of two categories. There are the ‘outer forces’ of the spectacle itself. These forces include “the spectators, and the makers of the spectacle.” Tuncel’s second layer of “inner forces” is characterized by a widely shared experiential participation in “imagination, feeling, [and] ecstasy.”⁴⁵ He posits a logical, nuanced, alternative understanding that suggests that spectacle operates on various levels.

The modes of spectacle used in mass entertainment such as rock concerts and sporting events are perceptibly different from the forms being employed in the art world. The half-time entertainment extravaganza at the 2013 Super Bowl game was a sledgehammer of sights and sounds. It used more than one thousand loudspeakers, a dizzying mixture of hundreds of strobe lights, pan/tilt/rotating flood-lights, spot-lights, LED fixtures, pyrotechnics and a massive twenty-four foot

⁴⁵ “Review: Yunus Tuncel, *Toward a Genealogy of Spectacle: Understanding Contemporary Spectacular Experiences*” *Foucault Studies*, No. 15 by Apple Zefelius Igrek, February 2013, <http://rauli.cbs.dk/index.php/foucault-studies/article/viewFile/3998/4383176-179>.

by thirty-two foot video wall⁴⁶ delivered a stupefying backdrop to the performers on stage. Viewers could not fail to notice that the half-time show was seeking to do something unprecedented. Using Tuncel's notion, the Super Bowl performance would be read as an overt commoditization of spectacle.⁴⁷ This level of spectacle, akin to mass entertainment events like rock concerts, monster truck competitions, NASCAR and the WWF can be easily differentiated from the spectacle found in the contemporary art world. In the case of the Serpentine pavilions, however, the function and form of spectacle is different. First, the delivery and intensity of aesthetic stimulation differs from that of low cultural forms of mass culture. Secondly, the use of spectacle by the architects elicits different outcomes. Whereas the Super Bowl is intended to sear the images of the various high-paying corporate sponsors into the consciousness of spectators, the contemporary art world's use of spectacle – originating and upheld by elite notions of cultural production – aims at providing social or political meaning across the class spectrum through the sensorial and critical engagement with the architectural products.

To be sure, the visual spectacle of the Serpentine pavilions operates on a much different level than the mega mass-entertainment visuals. Peyton-Jones describes the effect of the spatial and material power of SANNA's 2009 pavilion: its "tilted, sweeping wall... was a beacon within the park that drew people to the Serpentine." She identified the striking red aesthetics of the angled wall as a decidedly

⁴⁶ "Bob Barnhart: Lighting the Super Bowl XLVIII Halftime Show," Studio Live Design, by Ellen Lampert-Greaux, February 6, 2014, <http://livedesignonline.com/super-bowl-xlvi-2014-halftime-show/bob-barnhart-lighting-super-bowl-xlvi-2014-halftime-show>.

⁴⁷ "Review: Yunus Tuncel, Toward a Genealogy of Spectacle: Understanding Contemporary Spectacular Experiences," Foucault Studies, No. 15 by Apple Zefelius Igreg, February 2013, <http://rauli.cbs.dk/index.php/foucault-studies/article/viewFile/3998/4383176-179>.

unexpected visual experience for visitors and spectators in the park. The contrast of the red against green – the man-made against nature – acted as a trigger for heightened awareness. As Peyton-Jones explained, the 2009 pavilion drew remarkable attendance; it was the third best attended design exhibit globally.⁴⁸ Spectacle as seen at the pavilion series verses the Super Bowl demonstrates how this phenomena in varying degrees.

Peyton-Jones' adept understanding of spectacle' capacity informs how she selects architects. She invites only renowned international architects or architect-led collaborative teams.⁴⁹ This draws on a strategy central to Peyton-Jones curatorial methodology: favoring high profile artists. Her featuring of prominent practitioners increases both the visibility and viability of the gallery.⁵⁰ Specifying the invitation of famous architects is an adaptation of her well-tested curatorial strategy. Her architectural invitees have included impactful self-promoters such as the formidable Zaha Hadid, whom Rem Koolhaas (also a powerhouse and invitee) describes as "a planet in her own inimitable orbit".⁵¹ Hadid is often referred to as 'starchitect' - a handle for high-profile architects of exceptional caliber, known for spectacular buildings. Fujimoto follows the gallery's bias towards famous practitioners, having won multiple international awards including the Golden Lion

⁴⁸ Jodidio, *Serpentine Gallery Pavilion*, 15-21.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁰ "Speech by HE Bernard Emié, French Ambassador to the United Kingdom at the Ceremony to Award the Insignia of Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres to Julia Peyton-Jones et Hans-Ulrich Obrist Serpentine Gallery," http://www.ambafranceuk.org/IMG/pdf/Amba_S_26022013.pdf?5058/b455cf2d08b41f690fbcf6bc2936fba753eee5f4.

⁵¹ "Queen of the Curve," *The Guardian*, Sec. Culture Art and Design, by Rowan Moore, September, 8, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/sep/08/zaha-hadid-serpentine-sackler-profile>.

for National Participation at the Venice Architectural Biennale in 2012.⁵² He is, as Peyton-Jones has noted, “widely acknowledged as one of the most important architects coming to prominence worldwide.”⁵³ Not surprisingly Peyton-Jones has willingly delivered resounding endorsements of Fujimoto, identifying him as “one of the most fascinating architects in the world today,” calling him “a visionary,”⁵⁴ and saying his design for the pavilion “will enthrall everyone that encounters it.”⁵⁴ Peyton-Jones’ assurance that the creation by the exulted Fujimoto would captivate audiences fuelled anticipation for the architectural spectacle.

Inside the high-cultural arena, reputation is critical. Becker argues that the activities central to the production and consumption of art are interwoven and inseparable, and “routinely make and unmake reputation.” He explains that art worlds “reward that special worth with esteem and, frequently but not necessarily, in more material ways too. They use reputations, once made, to organize other activities, treating things and people with distinguished reputations differently from others.”⁵⁵ Becker characterizes reputation as pivoting on the mutual reinforcement between the unique work and the esteemed professional.⁵⁶ This echoing process and the power of celebrity are emphasized by sociologist Sarah Thornton. She relates it to the preeminent Tate Museum’s Turner Prize. The winners and runners up receive intense media coverage globally. Thornton describes the formidability of this

⁵² “Serpentine 2013 Press Package,” Serpentine Galleries, accessed December 12, 2013, <http://www.serpentinegalleries.org/about/press-page>.

⁵³ “Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2013 Designed by Sou Fujimoto,” Serpentine Gallery, <http://www.serpentinegalleries.org/exhibitions-events/serpentine-gallery-pavilion-2013-sou-fujimoto>.

⁵⁴ “Serpentine 2013 Press Package” Serpentine Galleries, accessed December 12, 2013, <http://www.serpentinegalleries.org/about/press-page>.

⁵⁵ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 352.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 353.

award's influence and the ensuing press: "the Turner Prize consecrates and desecrates artists at the same time."⁵⁷

Artists Damien Hirst and Jeff Koons are symbolic of reputation stepped up into a branding device. The artists with stratospheric reputation command top dollar in the global art market; this focuses the media maelstrom on them, and in turn moves their remuneration to ever new levels.⁵⁸ This phenomenon of the cult of the artist's persona⁵⁹ entices companies outside the art world to clamor for the opportunity to link their identity and products to these artists. Unusual industry pairings have been made: Koon's pink *Balloon Venus* graced packaging for limited edition bottles of Dom Perignon champagne, and Hirst designed chic backpacks for the billionaire Olsen twins. Both Koons and Hirst vividly illustrate how, in the upper end of the art world, reputation functions in the matrix of capitalism, consumerism and culture as spectacle.

In *The Culture Industry*, Marxist critic Theodor Adorno suggests that quantitative measures of accomplishments (all part and parcel of reputation and celebrity making) subliminally or overtly lead to artistic works and cultural products and services that resemble contests and sport.⁶⁰ Adorno's notions consider mass-marketing and reputation as capitalist tool that devalues art by positioning it in such a competitive, sports-like matrix.⁶¹ Historian Eric Hobsbawn's more

⁵⁷ Sarah Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World* (London: Granta, 2008), 110.

⁵⁸ Martha Buskirk, *Creative Enterprise: Contemporary Art between Museum and Marketplace* (New York: Continuum, 2012), 261.

⁵⁹ "Cool Calm, Collector: John Walsh Meets Julia Peyton-Jones," *The Independent*, by John Walsh, December 13 1997, <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/interview-cool-calm-collector-1288560.html>.

⁶⁰ Theodor Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays On Mass Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 86.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 86.

contemporary analysis takes a similar view, stating concisely: “avant-garde art is merely a subdepartment of marketing.”⁶² Both Adorno and Hobsbawm cite legitimate concerns regarding the prevalence of, and appetite for, awards and conspicuous measures of success in the capitalist structure.

Cultural theorist Jan Jagodzinski focuses on the link between reputation and brand, placing the use of fame into a contemporary economic context. Her work illuminates the ideological concerns around cultural branding. This phenomenon is typical in the art world, and is exemplified by the practices of artists like Koons and Hirst. Jagodzinski posits that we are living in an era of ‘Designer Capitalism,’ brands are paramount and operate hand in hand with public relations to signify status in advanced capitalism.⁶³ This said, however, the spectacle of celebrity used in the context of the cultural realm is often derided. Jack Shelf’s architectural review of the 2013 pavilion illustrates this negative discourse. He admonishes the pavilion commission process, complaining: “we must name the Serpentine Pavilion for what it is: a star factory whose elitist self-perpetuation typifies the vapid iconicity of the pre-Crash years. This is a massive work of architectural branding, or at best, architecture-as-sculpture.”⁶⁴ Shelf’s assertion is emblematic of the opposition to celebrity and branding in contemporary art.

The heightened importance of brand-power in the luxury sector is usefully elaborated by design historian Dyan Sudjic, who affirms that branding is a critical

⁶² “The Man Who Knew Almost Everything: Inside the Great Social Historian Eric Hobsbawm There Was An Aesthetic Waiting to Come Out,” *The National*, by Guha Ramachandra, November 12, 2013, <http://www.thenation.com/article/177135/man-who-knew-almost-everything?page=0,1#>.

⁶³ Jan Jagodzinski, *Visual Art and Education in an Era of Designer Capitalism: Deconstructing the Oral Eye* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 69.

⁶⁴ “Harmony Cannot be Obvious,” *Domus*, by Jack Shelf, June 10, 2013, http://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/2013/06/7/sou_fujimoto_serpentinegallery.html.

signifier implicitly understood by the consumer to mark experience as elevated and unique.⁶⁵ Peyton-Jones' insistence on engaging the world's acclaimed and reputable makers conveys to the audience a commitment to excellence and a promise of the extraordinary; celebrity serves as a guarantee for a premium cultural experience. Fujimoto's architectural brand elevates the Serpentine Galleries and forwards his own status. The first flurry of media covering his invitation positions his reputation of award-winning work in a spotlight that consecrates the galleries' art-worldly savvy, while later coverage of his pavilion reinforces the architect's abilities and reputation. Her strategy is successful, and affords the gallery brand recognition and upper class standing in the high-cultural realm.⁶⁶

The intentional use of prominent architects extends Peyton-Jones' curatorial strategy of capitalizing on fame in service of cultural stewardship. The incorporation of celebrity is a common branding approach in the hyper-consumer market place of advanced capitalism. However, Peyton-Jones astutely adapts this contemporary convention, leveraging architects of the first tier to drive the pavilion exhibition. Excoriating commentary like Jack Shelf's, which calls the pavilion commission a star-factory, does not acknowledge the altruistic results this provides the Serpentine Pavilion program. Peyton-Jones' insistence on recognized architectural minds reflects a big-picture strategic direction: she attaches high achievers to the exhibition in order to provide an advanced architectural experience to the public. The use of celebrity architects does not guarantee architectural greatness. However, the probability of superior design is increased, since

⁶⁵ Deyan Sudjic, *Luxury In The Language of Things: Understanding The World Of Objects* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2009), 81-94.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

professionals have already judged and awarded the practitioners for their outstanding merit. Petyon-Jones's mission to showcase exemplary contemporary architecture also profits from a self-governing loop: the gallery engages consummate architects, and global media exposure, compels the designers to deliver headline-grabbing creations to the public.

Some critics and commentators have questioned how successful Petyon-Jones's scheme of privileging starchitects has been in delivering innovative architecture. Measuring creative value is challenging and subjective. As Becker notes: "art worlds produce works and also give them aesthetic value." He continues this line of thinking when he describes how this unfolds. "The interactions of all the involved parties produce a shared sense of the worth of what they collectively produce."⁶⁷ This conceptualization of distributed benefits is useful when seeking to assess the effects of Peyton-Jones' work. Indeed, Richard Rogers' review of the pavilion series success can be considered legitimate in light of Becker's notion that relevant evaluations come from within a specific sphere. The acclaimed and highly accomplished, Pitzker Prize winning architect assures us: "the pavilions, erected for relatively little money, are unbelievably good. I couldn't single one out that I have liked more than the others – they have all been masterpieces."⁶⁸ Peyton-Jones' winning strategy has consistently resulted in innovative architecture over a fourteen year time span.

⁶⁷ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 39.

⁶⁸ Jodidio, "Summer at the Serpentine: Ten Years of Temporary Pavilions by Top Architects," accessed December 9, 2014, http://www.taschen.com/pages/en/catalogue/architecture/new/06774/facts.serpentine_gallery_pavilions.htm.

The commission criterion that affords on-going iterations of spectacular structures also provides opportunities to architects that have yet to build in the UK. This “glocal” approach (to use a popular term) – represents a partnering of local and global artistic art worlds, and is a comprehensive inclusive curatorial mode of Peyton-Jones’. Her employment of fame pays off here: the exhibit brings a sampling of outstanding, worldwide, conceptual works to the cultural arena. Peyton-Jones’ insistence on starchitects is a celebrity-curation modality, a successful application of spectacular reputations as a constructive tool in the cultural realm.

Peyton-Jones structured the pavilion commission format to afford creative freedom for the architects. Her goal a space of freedom where innovative iterations of contemporary architecture can be realized. Peyton-Jones made the pavilion guidelines minimal in their demands, and advises that the criteria are designed to provoke experimentation by providing “an unparalleled freedom for architects.”⁶⁹ “Opened rather than restrictive,” the brief provides no design direction. It asks for nominal functional requirements, and thus removes many practical problems typically found in architecture projects.⁷⁰ She believes by alleviating the majority of common architectural restraints such as plumbing, heating and ventilation the undemanding requirements encourage a format of lightness.⁷¹ In tandem with the minimal requirements, the pavilion’s short lifespan is also cited by Peyton-Jones as

⁶⁹ Jodidio, *Serpentine Gallery Pavilions*, 16.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁷¹ Christopher Sell, “The Serpentine Pavilion Is The Ideal Brief,” *Architects' Journal* 230, no. 2 (2009): 8-9, <http://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/daily-news/-the-serpentine-pavilion-is -the-ideal-brief/5204783.article>.

an additional advantage that allows for creative freedom.⁷² This combination of low functionality and temporality releases the architect, allowing for unfettered design solutions that focus on conceptual elements. She explains that the pavilion design brief request that the pavilion might be an example of their architectural “language.”⁷³ Peyton-Jones’ format for the pavilion series strives for freedom of the architectural imaginary.

To be sure, freedom is a controversial concept in the contemporary cultural realm. Art historian Julian Stallabrass argues that it is impossible for cultural work to be free and uncontaminated by market pressures. His position is inflexible and troubling, and stands in direct opposition Peyton-Jones mandate of affording freedom. Indeed, Stallabrass emphasizes the complicit union of cultural products with commodity culture as a pervasive, and negative, aspect of advanced capitalism. For him, term ‘Zone of Freedom’ is a misnomer: he argues that the concept of artistic freedom is a myth. Stallabrass claims that genuine creative agency is not possible within the contemporary advanced capitalistic framework, governed as it is by the all-pervasive exchange of money.

Stallabrass provides one view of freedom and market forces in the contemporary art world. Adorno deals with the same issues around culture and freedom, but takes a more lenient view. In his essay *Free Time*, he clarifies that the all-pervading system of capitalism and consumerism has not entirely overtaken individuals. Adorno posits the idea of a cognitive gap, a human capacity he terms ‘split-

⁷² Jodidio, *Serpentine Gallery Pavilions*, 11.

⁷³ *Ibid*,16.

consciousness.’⁷⁴ This fissure of intellectual openness allows for human agency within the socio-economic system, and places in reserve the possibility of freedom and (what operates as) free thought. Adorno clarifies this gap in *Aesthetic Theory*: “absolute freedom in art, always limited to a particular, comes into contradictions with the perennial unfreedom of the whole.”⁷⁵ Adorno adheres to his view of a space that allows for artistic freedom but also qualifies its specificity.

The last several decades has seen many and divided critiques on the ideological possibility of artistic autonomy. Art historian Martha Buskirk, in her 2012 analysis of the dynamics of art and business, sums up the divide between freedom and advanced capitalism: “the art world has to be understood as an industry, at the same time that art production retains a utopian dimension for many who contribute to the enterprise.”⁷⁶ Culture, business and artistic freedom are at odds. Nevertheless, Peyton-Jones supports the ideological tenant of artistic freedom. Fujimoto’s spectacular cloud-like form, shifting between geometry and the insubstantial, delivers an ethereal architectural creation actualized in a place of openness – Peyton-Jones’ space of freedom.

Peyton-Jones identifies how appreciation of architecture is enhanced through lived experience. In discussing architecture she has stated that, “when trying to understand a building, I find it difficult to read drawings or photographs. It doesn’t tell you what it’s like to stand in it. A beautifully designed structure makes your

⁷⁴ Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, 196-97.

⁷⁵ Julian Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2012.

⁷⁶ Martha Buskirk, *Creative Enterprise: Contemporary Art Between Museum and Marketplace* (New York: Continuum, International Publishing Group, 2012), 328.

spirits soar.”⁷⁷ This ideology underpinned her vision to establish the pavilion project. Because she believes there is a “resistance to engage with contemporary architecture,”⁷⁸ the commission incorporates extensive programming to counter this reluctance. And indeed, architecture’s capacity to translate thought into physical and mental reality sits at the heart of Peyton-Jones’ vision and work on the pavilion project.

A range of events allows audiences to inhabit the pavilion and to become engaged both somatically and intellectually with the architecture. The pavilions operate as outdoor cafés and venues for educational and entertainment. These activities provide varying types of engagement through programming. Another more intensified form of live engagement was provided by United Visual Artists who added countless flashing LED lights to Fujimoto’s pavilion, and a soundtrack to create a lightning storm. These designers stated that their objective was to “make [Fujimoto’s] architecture breathe” and to “evoke the sensation of an overwhelming natural phenomenon.” They aimed to create a cross referential experience that merge the “digital, electronic and the awe-inspiring natural world.”⁷⁹ The scintillating light and eerie sound effects deliberately sought to provoke amazement and produced and to operate as a, multi-sensorial event.

Becker supports such active engagement with cultural products. He states: “audiences learn unfamiliar conventions by experiencing them, by interacting with

⁷⁷ “Julia Peyton-Jones: ‘I Feel Impoverished. We Are Adrift From Nature’,” *The Independent*, by Rob Sharp, June 27, 2011, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/julia-peytonjones-i-feel-impoverished-we-are-adrift-from-nature-2303226.html>.

⁷⁸ Jodidio, *Serpentine Gallery Pavilions*, 13.

⁷⁹ “Stunning Light Show Puts You Inside An Electrical Storm,” *the creatorsproject*, by Kevin Holmes, July 3, 2013, <http://thecreatorsproject.vice.com/blog/serpentine-gallery-pavilion-sou-fujimoto-united-visual-artists>.

the work and, frequently, with other people in relation to the work. Audiences see and hear the new element in a variety of contexts.”⁸⁰ This view on engaging forms of culture is challenged by other art historians like Stallabrass, for whom artworks with experiential formats are reductive and tantamount to mass entertainment. Stallabrass specifically opposes installation art and exhibit design suggesting these types of work are no different than mass-culture. He notes that experiential works are regularly used in the contemporary art world as “loss-leaders for more marketable products.” He asserts that their appeal lies in attracting audiences to the destination and away from competing forms of entertainment like television, movies and sporting events.⁸¹

Art historian Deborah Root takes an opposite view to that of Stallabrass. She criticizes cultural objects and viewing experiences in Western museums and institutes, as dull and lifeless. Root describes the work as ‘dead art’.⁸² Her concern is stated simply: “art objects in museums are unable to engage the viewer in any dynamic way.”⁸³ She promotes the benefits of culture that can be engaged: “we must recognize that a certain energy returns to the art object when it is seen as part of the society in which it exists, which includes the noise and vigor of the marketplace.”⁸⁴ Root’s relevant critique of dreary exhibition practices suggests that dynamic engagement with culture is preferable.

⁸⁰ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 64.

⁸¹ Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated*, 25.

⁸² Debora Root, *Cannibal Culture Art, Appropriation, & the Commodification of Difference* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), 136.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 139.

Vibrant encounters with creative work often incorporate social interactions. With its long agenda of events and broad public participation, the Fujimoto pavilion offers an antidote to the scourge of dead art. Art historian Graham Coulter Smith discusses the wide interest in lived experience in the cultural realm, noting that “[Roland] Barthes in ‘The Death of the Author’ (1977), [Peter] Burger’s theory of the Avant-Garde, [Nicolas] Bourriaud’s Relational Aesthetics (2002) and [Clair] Bishop’s Installation Art” A Critical History (2005)” all discuss the issue. All this discourse focuses on ‘The concept of deconstructing the barrier between the viewer and the work of art which is closely allied to the long standing avant-gardist goal of bringing art into everyday life.’⁸⁵ Social interaction as a component of contemporary art is so prevalent that art historian Hal Foster feels culture and ‘experience economy’ to be definitely, permanently, intertwined. In particular he identifies a trend in cultural institutions commissioning new, spectacular spaces to drive tourism in a culture that values “experiential intensity.”⁸⁶ Becker, Smith and Foster all argue that the suturing of culture and live experiences is a given in the contemporary art world; the Serpentine pavilion commission is emblematic of this trend.

The method of phenomenology seeks to explain human sensory responses to cultural works. Art historian Amanda Boetzkes explains: “phenomenology interrogates how we interpret in the first place [and] through it presumes that the

⁸⁵ “Deconstructing Installation Art,” Installation Art, Pre-publication Manuscript, Chapter 2, Pg 1, by Graham Coulter-Smith, 2006, accessed December 26, 2013, <http://www.installationart.net/Chapter3/interaction>.

⁸⁶ “Hal Foster: The Art-Architecture Complex,” Bristol Festival of Ideas, by Barry Ramshaw, September 9, 2011, <http://www.ideasfestival.co.uk/2011/events/hal-foster/>.

artwork and the spectator situate one another within a shared network of sense.”⁸⁷ Boetzkes promotes the phenomenological approach as an alternative to typical art history examinations that explain artwork “through deference to the historic context (or socio-political framework) from which it emerged.”⁸⁸ She harnesses philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s theories to clarify phenomenology’s tenants. He explains: “we are interrogating our experience precisely in order to know how it opens us to what is not ourselves.”⁸⁹ He suggests that the senses, proceeding through ‘lived experience,’ provide a doorway to understanding. In the immediacy of a live encounter with art, the body can override preconceived ideas that the spectator may bring to material culture. Attending to the body and its senses, phenomenology considers the overlapping interconnection of touch and sight as a powerful medium of sensory information.⁹⁰

Peyton-Jones’ insistence that engaging with architecture in real time produces somatic reactions and her thinking owes considerable debt to the tenants of phenomenology. Fujimoto himself offers a reading of his pavilion that is set squarely in a phenomenological context. He describes the various ways that the structure can be encountered: “at the pavilion, people come into a cloud-like space, with a nice distribution of different densities of structure” and “you behave as you like, inspired by the bright areas, the dark areas, the landscape-like hilly spaces or

⁸⁷ Amanda Boetzkes, “Phenomenology and Interpretation Beyond The Flesh,” *Associations of Art Historians* 32, no. 4 (2009), 690–711, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-8365.2009.00698.x/pdf>.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 691.

⁸⁹ Amanda Boetzkes, “Phenomenology and Interpretation Beyond The Flesh,” *Associations of Art Historians* 32, no. 4 (2009), 690–711, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-8365.2009.00698.x/pdf>.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 692.

cozy areas, or openness.”⁹¹ The range of contrasting dimensions depicted in the same breath - light and dense; cozy and opened - points to the broad effects the space affords. Indeed, the architecture can conjure divergent visuals and overlapping sensorial effects, soliciting a corporal experience reminiscent of a synesthetic experience.⁹² Fujimoto’s quote references the qualities of immersive experience and indefinable sensory responses akin to the immediacy Foster describes as “sensuous particularity of experience in the here-and-now.”⁹³

Peyton-Jones’ pavilion series facilitates dynamic cultural engagement. These hyper-innovative spaces afford experiential effects that have the potential to connect the spectator corporally with contemporary architecture. While Root advocates for the vitality that creative work derives from the energy of the marketplace, the Fujimoto pavilion derived energy through live engagements in Hyde Park. Joggers stopped there, people held meetings, came for lunch and worked on their laptops.⁹⁴ Complementing such un-choreographed interactions, the dramatic light-show-cum-thunderstorm created an overt multi-sensory form of spectacle. The pavilions’ many forms of programming and unscripted daily activities create varied forms of lived experiences with the creative work from the visceral and staged to the intimate and leisurely. Peyton-Jones’ tactic of presenting

⁹¹ “17 Miles of Steel: Sou Fujimoto’s Serpentine Pavilion is a Hit in London,” BlouinARTINFO, by Janelle Zara, June 4, 2013 Art Fair Editions, Section: Object Lesson Architecture & Design News, <http://blogs.artinfo.com/objectlessons/2013/06/04/17-miles-of-steel-sou-fujimotos-serpentine-pavilion-is-a-hit-in-london/>.

⁹² Synesthesia is a condition where the brain overlaps sensory information so that they occur in conjunction with each other; music is perceived as having color and texture or numbers have color and perceptual depth.

⁹³ “Art-Architecture Complex by Hal Foster-Review,” The Guardian, by Rowan Moore, September 16, 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/sep/16/art-architecture-complex-foster-review>.

⁹⁴ “Serpentine Pavilion: Splendor in the Grass,” The Telegraph, by Sheryl Garratt, June 17, 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/architecture/7830103/Serpentine-pavilion-splendour-in-the-grass.html>.

innovative structures that afford stimulating somatic perceptions and emotional responses operates successfully as an experiential-modality. By using the park in the lighthearted summer season as an inviting exhibition venue, she enhances public access to architecture that might otherwise have seemed complex, visually challenging or oddly exotic. Peyton-Jones' curatorial activism ensures that the architecture can be appreciated by a range of visitors. The pavilion is not only for those who can intellectualize the works at varying conceptual depths, but for the unversed who can engage experientially, in a non-threatening way, through the physical acts of entering, sitting, climbing, or taking advantage of the unique venue to have a coffee. Situating the creations in an unthreatening setting brings the mass public to the threshold of remarkable contemporary architecture through the enticement of pleasant, sensorial real-world engagement. This demonstrates Peyton-Jones' use of the idea of spectacle as a sensorial strategy to deliver culture to the public.

IV

Peyton-Jones leverages the spectacle of celebrity and social performance to forward the Serpentine pavilion project. At the events, the attendees range from British locals to far flung international participants whose desire to attend the highly popular, highly visible and noteworthy events transcends geographic distances. The combination of the high-brow event, elite attendees and the noteworthy creations draws participation from a large spectrum of the art community, aligned industries

and the community at large. This coming together affords participants the opportunity to connect socially and to engage with the creative pavilion.

Social status is consecrated at the Serpentine pavilion launch: architect and gallery, designer and celebrities, royalty and government officials reinforce one another in each respective field. The Serpentine pavilion opening party is considered “one of the hottest events on the London event calendar and a recognized highlight on the social circuit.”⁹⁵ The tickets for the event are coveted and released to select “A-List” guests. Many reports on the Fujimoto pavilion launch reflect a mass-entertainment flavor with Hollywood-like overtones. Most frequently commented on was attendees with an emphasis on top personalities including actress Sarah Jessica Parker, late fashion designer L’Wren Scott with her infamous rock star boyfriend Mick Jagger and Princess Beatrice of York. Coverage is light on analysis of the art-architecture, emphasizing frivolity and flash instead. Reports from the opening have been reminiscent of the style of press used at the American Academy Awards’ red carpet event. Popular web-sites and on-line publications including The Huffington Post, arts section of daily newspapers, business sites like *Business Wire*, and fashion sites *Vogue* and *In-Style* profiled arriving stars who struck model poses with hand on hip to better show the designer label they were sporting. A number of sectors are represented; the only criteria are elitism and wealth.

⁹⁵ “Rebecca Wang Joins Mick Jagger and L’Wren Scott at Hyde Park Serpentine Summer Party,” *Business Wire*, by Rebecca Wang, June 28, 2013, <http://www.businesswire.com/new/home/2013>.

Peyton-Jones regards overt social displays with members from aligned creative fields a normal occurrence in the contemporary art world. She elucidates her view of the intersection of divergent cultural groups participating in the art world events:

Art, fashion, architect, and design: they all come together. For the art world events are very much about work, but work and play blend in a grand promenade of objects and people. Art and fashion are put on display, and the whole affair is as thrilling as it is unpredictable.⁹⁶

Peyton-Jones accommodates ‘the river of time’ and the contemporary art world’s synergies with related fields like fashion and entertainment. Her view is a practical, Becker-like stance. He suggests that, in general, “we can study social organizations of all kinds by looking for the networks responsible for producing specific events, the overlaps among such cooperative networks, the way participants use conventions to coordinate their activities” and he clarifies that conventions within this system “make coordinated action possible.”⁹⁷ He carefully defines “social organizations” as a metaphorical reference of networks and their activities.⁹⁸ The launch of the Fujimoto pavilion is a model of the blending of social sectors in the contemporary art world, and it operates, accordingly, in a ‘see and be seen’ display of status and access.

Peyton-Jones’ interlinking of high—end art with upper—end society speaks to a pairing other theorists in the art world consider standard. Art historian Martha Buskirk acknowledges the centrality of the social sway in the contemporary art world and considers the attraction of the art opening and social interaction in light of social and relational aesthetics. “Hobnobbing with artists” she notes, and being

⁹⁶ “Julia Peyton-Jones on Art and Fashion,” *Women’s Wear Daily*, by Karen Marta June 29, 2011, <http://www.wwd.com/eye/people/julia-peyton-jones-on-art-and-fashion-3692755>.

⁹⁷ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 371.

⁹⁸ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 370.

part of the creative scene, is “a significant attraction for collectors of contemporary art.” “It is, therefore,” she continues,” not surprising that Bourriaud’s relational model privileges the art—opening resulting in an emphasis on social function hardly at odds with the general dynamic of the art world.”⁹⁹ Buskirk’s perspective contextualizes the festivities of the Fujimoto pavilion, which represent the overarching trend of the social in the contemporary art world.

Many factions of the upper social echelon attend high-end art functions to display their social status in the company of V.I.P. attendees. In this form of spectacle, an extraverted human performance, numerous signs of status indicate high-culture savvy: designer garments and super-model modes of deportment, and sheer proximity to other high status attendees. The pavilion acts as a container of the social: within it, guests enact conventions that reinforce their select ranking or their aspirational desires of inclusion in the elite art world milieu. This human spectacle exists on two planes: an overt visual level signals class membership, and an internal conceptual level of imagined superiority.

Importantly, Petyon-Jones’ uses social bricolage comprised of celebrities and the elite across industry sectors to forward the exhibition series. The pavilion events merge art, fashion, architecture, and design across top sectors of the wealthy and famous. She embraces the trend of human spectaculularization, capitalizing on its appeal. Peyton-Jones profits from social hierarchy by allowing the enthralling allure of the elite to propel extensive media coverage. News of the latest pavilion spreads into multiple arenas from gossip columns to academic sectors, reaching a spectrum that includes those unfamiliar with works in the creative arena to art-architecture

⁹⁹ Buskirk, *Creative Enterprise, Contemporary Art*, 281.

fanatics. This fanfare disseminates the pavilion series to a comprehensive breadth of society. Her hosting of glamorous celebrity-packed affairs can be judged as serving superficial capitalist constructs within an image-focused society. But the benefits that are realized by leveraging high powered social reputations must not be dismissed. Peyton-Jones' use of class performativity is intentional: attending to the elite achieves a counterintuitive inclusive outcome for the exhibition series. The funds obtained through high-priced party tickets and the extensive press coverage of the bedazzling attendees contributes to the work being available for all, not just the art world. Peyton-Jones ultimately connects many social groups where unfettered access to the pavilion series is the signature of her cultural activism.

V

That Peyton-Jones' cultural strategies rely on celebrity in order to assure the artistic merit of the pavilion makes perfect sense. The patronage of the wealthy- Buskirk's hobnobbers, support Peyton-Jones' clearly and carefully considered agenda. Monetary gifts from elite patrons constitute funds for the commissioning and construction of the temporary public pavilion series; the solicitation of these funds can be seen as an exercise in institutional philanthropy. However, this system of the redistribution of wealth also raises questions.

On one hand, Peyton-Jones' modalities for the pavilion series can be seen as pragmatic and as Becker's framework suggests, derived from exposure in her sphere of the art world. However, the premise for the architectural series and Peyton-Jones' style of cultural economics can also be seen as problematic

pandering to the elite. The development of the series was based on earlier commissions for temporary roves to shelter V.I.P. party goers. Extravagant parties that cater to the high profile and the ultra wealthy such as Princess Diana can be viewed as extraneous to a cultural mandate. This is exacerbated when it is acknowledged that as a public institute the Serpentine, receives a percentage of their operating budget from tax payer's funds.¹⁰⁰ In addition, the excess connected to an impermanent building that operates primarily as a summer social container suggests wastefulness that is morally problematic.

The world of high-culture, with its associations to exclusionary excess and extravagance, is frequently the target of criticism and ideologically positioned analysis. Such criticism is relayed vividly in two articles - one by Julian Stallabrass (2012) and the other a blog posting by art critic David Lee (2013). In his article in the Art Newspaper, titled *A Sad Reflection on the Art World*, Stallabrass looks at the high-end contemporary art world and its conflicted relationship with money. Stallabrass explains that the art world has an aversion to the business reality that art is just another luxury commodity. Globalization, he contextualizes, affected a major shift in art's status: art changed from being exclusive to being somewhat crass, and aligned with aspects of "celebrity, publicity, branding and the glitzy display of riches." Stallabrass cites a rash of significant socio-economic problems of the era, all of which impacted the art realm: the financial crises; the dramatic shrinking of the middle class; environmental problems; and many other issues. These factors, he

¹⁰⁰ "Julia Peyton-Jones: 'I feel Impoverished. We are Adrift From Nature'," The Independent, by Rob Sharp, June 27, 2011, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/julia-peytonjones-i-feel-impoverished-we-are-adrift-from-nature-2303226.html>.

suggests, have caused capitalism to lose its credibility, and make the consuming of expensive art reprehensible. Stallabrass suggests that contemporary art in the top end of the market remains mostly unaffected, despite the shaken monetary and ideological context. He calls highly collectable work used primarily as an investment vehicle ‘hedge-fund art. Stallabrass speculates that if art is meant to reflect social, political or human conditions, then art used for investment purposes implicates mans unseemly, complicit relationship within the all pervasive monetary system. He goes on to note that the upper end of the art world is comprised of a “tiny elite” who use contemporary art as a financial instrument; he suggests that outside of this closed group, millions find contemporary art unappealing and lacking.¹⁰¹

Another scathing critique of elitism and the artwork is delivered by Lee, who has called the evening parties at the Serpentine “hoolies for the vain and vulgar.”¹⁰² For him, the ostentatious limos lined up ‘chrome to chrome’ at an evening event symbolize all that is wrong with State Art. Lee challenges the government Arts Counsel funding of 1.3 million pounds a year and derides the Serpentine’s use of public money (raised through the lottery) as theft from the poor that benefits the rich. This money, Lee asserts, goes to the Serpentine exhibits of “deluxe branded art” with inferior aesthetics that the public does not care about. He infers that the public money is being used to forward contemporary art that is exclusively in the interest of the wealthy. Lee acknowledges the 14 million pounds donated by a

¹⁰¹ Julian Stallabrass, “A Sad Reflection on the Art World,” *The Art Newspaper*, December 05, 2012, <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/A-sad-reflection-on-the-art-world/28099>.

¹⁰² David Lee, “Serpentine Gallery Extension: Limousines are Good Causes,” *The Jackdaw* (blog), November, 2013, <http://www.thejackdaw.co.uk/?p=1249>.

benefactor to the Serpentine as a reinforcement of the closed relationship between the contemporary art world and the rich. He sarcastically references the gallery as ‘public-spirited’ while implying that it is not charitable or attuned to public use. Lee disparagingly correlates the Serpentine’s operation with mob-like activities, summarizing its elitist structure as a “perfectly rounded system of self-interest and exclusion.”¹⁰³

Thornton reports on of the wealthy and their involvement in the upper-end art world describing affluent participants as highly involved, with some owning their own twenty-eight room museums, operating private art foundations and focusing relentlessly on acquisitions. To further elucidates the sheer level of affluence she points out that the private jet service Net-Jets at the Frieze Art Fair has an ultra VIP room within the VIP lounge.¹⁰⁴ The strategies that define the Serpentine bring to the fore the uneasy relationship between money and art; the art world’s association with, and dependency on, the wealthy is contentious. Art has long been prized an autonomous field (or at least one at arm’s length from business), and when this autonomy is muddied by capitalist agendas, ethical concerns arise.

Peyton-Jones’ aforementioned attention to celebrity architects also leaves this curatorial strategy open to suspicion. Her criterion to only select architects of renown is an adaptation of the successful, prevalent contemporary business modality that leverages celebrity to promote entertainment, products, and services. This is a well worn, easily recognizable approach: capitalism’s hyper-consumer economy uses image for endorsements and promotion at every turn. By linking the

¹⁰³ David Lee, “Serpentine Gallery Extension: Limousines are Good Causes,” *The Jackdaw* (blog), November, 2013, <http://jackdaw.co.uk/?p=1249>.

¹⁰⁴ Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World*, 88 - 93.

pavilion program to the world's awarded and reputable makers, Peyton-Jones promises the audience a taste of the extraordinary. But in the art world, self-serving identity-making is seen as a blatant consumer marketing strategy. Critics worry that the adoption of a ploy directly related to the commercial image industry diminishes the integrity of creative works. The apprehension is that, intentionally or unintentionally, artists will adapt works to conform to standards that will further a reputation of fame. Against this reticence, Peyton-Jones' curatorial methodology may also be read simply as a public relations device.

Though Stallabrass and Lee condemn approaches like Peyton-Jones', the Fujimoto pavilion series received positive reviews in the media. The majority of reports in the popular press, blogs and postings on Instagram suggest that, the pavilion project offers the public important opportunities to engage with spectacular contemporary culture. The aim here is to strike an objective analysis between of the ideological critiques, the endorsements of the mainstream media and Peyton-Jones' methods.

VI

Peyton-Jones achieves her stated mission - to make art accessible to everyone and to contribute to the ongoing discussion on contemporary culture - through a system of cultural entrepreneurship. Peyton-Jones' processes embody, in her words, an 'entrepreneurial spirit.'¹⁰⁵ American business author and philosopher Peter Drucker defines entrepreneurship as a process marked by the seeking and exploitation of

¹⁰⁵ "Speech by HE Bernard Emié, French Ambassador to the United Kingdom at the Ceremony to Award the Insignia of Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres to Julia Peyton-Jones et Hans-Ulrich Obrist Serpentine Gallery," http://www.ambafranceuk.org/IMG/pdf/Amba_S_26022013.pdf?5058/b455cf2d08b41f690fbcf6bc2936fba753eee5f4.

opportunity.¹⁰⁶ Financing of entrepreneurial ventures can be achieved through two general paths: by efficiently maximizing internal finances, or by raising capital from outside sources. Peyton-Jones' process seeks outside capital, undertaking major fundraising to enable the gallery and its architectural program to be sustained at no charge to the public. The architects are paid stipends for the commission, and there is no allocated budget for the project. Consequently the structure must be produced with the fees that are raised each year.¹⁰⁷ It is risky to repeat this format of a zero dollar initiative. It requires the securing of both finances and resources, making the pavilion essentially a new business venture annually. The inherent risk due to uncertainty is a key way that the program parallels an entrepreneurial endeavor, and it situates Peyton-Jones as a savvy cultural entrepreneur. The funds to accomplish the pavilion are acquired through corporate sponsors, private individuals and foundations. Up to forty percent of the cost is recovered through the sell-off of the structure to a private collector.¹⁰⁸ The sponsors of Fujimoto's pavilion included captains of industry such as: Hewlett Packard; Weil a prominent British law firm; international specialist insurer and underwriter Hiscox; media conglomerate The Independent. Fashion houses have been key backers for the pavilion's "Park Nights" series, with large luxury brands including Yves Saint Laurent, Jimmy Choo and Burberry participating¹⁰⁹ and Swedish clothing firm COS

¹⁰⁶ "Peter Drucker," Good Quotes, accessed April 21, 2014
<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/412987-this-defines-entrepreneur-and-entrepreneurship---the-entrepreneur-always-searches>.

¹⁰⁷ Christopher Sell, "The Serpentine Pavilion is the Ideal Brief," *Architects' Journal* 230, no. 2 (2009): 8-9, <http://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/daily-news/-the-serpentine-pavilion-is-the-ideal-brief/5204783.article>.

¹⁰⁸ Jodidio, *Serpentine Gallery Pavilion*, 20.

¹⁰⁹ "Speech by HE Bernard Emié, French Ambassador to the United Kingdom at the Ceremony to Award the Insignia of Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres to Julia Peyton-Jones et Hans-Ulrich Obrist

sponsoring the 2013 events.¹¹⁰ A survey of Serpentine patrons can be summarized as a cohort of prominent corporations and wealthy citizens.¹¹¹

Peyton-Jones' fundraising abilities are notable. Her aptitude is confirmed by Rob Sharp of the Independent, who describes her as a 'powerhouse.' He advises that she has spear headed multi-million dollar auctions with art donated from world class artists such as Jeff Koons and collects hundreds of pounds per ticket for the pavilions' summer parties.¹¹² Peyton-Jones is known for her tenacity regarding fundraising, and tells her own story of having her calls refused by Colin Tweedy when he was the chief executive of the prominent British Arts & Business organization. Peyton-Jones describes sitting outside his office and declaring that she would not leave until he saw her.¹¹³ Her resolve resulted in her securing Diana Princess of Wales as a patron in 1993. This royal support allowed for the gallery's program expansion and the building's critical renovation.¹¹⁴ More recently, Peyton-Jones brought American business tycoon Michael Bloomberg on as a patron through the Bloomberg Philanthropies. In both cases, she achieved critical financial gain through these exceptional patrons. In his 2013 speech, Emie summarized Peyton-Jones' fundraising skills as hypnotizing and contextualized her financial

Serpentine Gallery," [ambafrance-uk.org](http://www.ambafrance-uk.org), 26 February 2013, http://www.ambafranceuk.org/IMG/pdf/Amba_S_26022013.pdf?5058/b455cf2d08b41f690fbcf6bc2936fba753eee5f4.

¹¹⁰ "COS Supports Summer at the Serpentine Gallery," The Telegraph, Sec. Fashion, by Ellie Pither July 12, 2013 <https://www.google.com/search?q=serpentine+2013+fashion+sponsor+&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a&channel=np&source=hp>.

¹¹¹ Serpentine Press package

¹¹² "Julia Peyton-Jones: I feel impoverished. We are Adrift from Nature," The Independent, by Rob Sharp, June 27, 2011, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/julia-peytonjones-i-feel-impoverished-we-are-adrift-from-nature-2303226.html>.

¹¹³ "Julia Peyton-Jones," COS Stores, by Penny Martin, accessed February 11, 2014, http://www.cosstores.com/gb/Magazine/AW13Julia_Peyton_Jones.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

acumen as a feat that allows for expansion and free entry at a time when most cultural institutes are forced to curtail their activities.¹¹⁵

The Serpentine Gallery website reflects a strong business sensibility. Its copy indicates that the institution understands the business needs (and wants) of its contributing members and potential sponsors. Benefits that are available to those who give financially to the gallery are highlighted in the following text:

Connect your brand with world-class innovation, creativity and our intimate circle of cultural luminaries and leading options formers through an association with the Serpentine Galleries. The Serpentine works with each of its corporate partners in a bespoke manner to create a tailor made package of benefits to align with their unique initiatives.¹¹⁶

The wording is tuned to entice financially well positioned sponsors. It conveys status using elitist words such as ‘bespoke’ and ‘intimate’ to signal exclusive and customized treatment appealing to top flight groups or individuals. The designators ‘world-class’ and ‘luminaries’ promise stellar associations to those who are connected with the Serpentine. The practical business methods illustrated here are grounded in the realities and expectations of contemporary corporations and investors.

In many ways, the art world has always been this way: money has been in the service of culture, and culture in the service of money. In the Renaissance, for example art was commissioned and purchased by the dukes, popes and monarchy and remained in the service of those in power. In fact, art has always turned on the

¹¹⁵ “Speech by HE Bernard Emié, French Ambassador to the United Kingdom at the Ceremony to Award the Insignia of Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres to Julia Peyton-Jones et Hans-Ulrich Obrist Serpentine Gallery,” http://www.ambafranceuk.org/IMG/pdf/Amba_S_26022013.pdf?5058/b455cf2d08b41f690fbcf6bc2936fba753eee5f4.

¹¹⁶ “Corporate Sponsorship,” Serpentine Gallery, accessed April 12, 2014, <http://www.serpentinegalleries.org/support/companies>.

bounty of private money. At the Serpentine, the patronage of industry barons and royalty parallel this ancient, time-worn approach to sustaining culture. But despite long patterns of the privileged classes supporting cultural production, the critique remains. Does the spectacle of decadence, glamour, Hollywood-esque celebrity, and exclusive events represent an ideologically problematic exertion of power? The answer to this reasonable, and perhaps rhetorical, question is complicated. The Serpentine project would not be possible were it not for the support of corporate and private wealth. At the same time, the material, aesthetic and social advantages of Peyton-Jones' fund raising and leadership are real. How does one navigate between these two truths?

Peyton-Jones embraces the economic advantages of participating with capitalism in order to fund public cultural programs. She refuses to take sides regarding the ethical and ideological concerns around neo-liberalism. Peyton-Jones states she is apolitical, and she has consistently maintained a non-partisan position. However, her professed unbiased stance might well operate as is a strategy that allows her to actively cultivate a range of the upper echelon and provide luxury treatment for this audience. The parties, with their fashion sponsors and celebrity attendees, are a necessary performance that successfully fuels fundraising for the pavilion program.

Peyton-Jones' deliberately calculated work of raising funds from multiple sectors of the top ranks of society and business to provide art for the masses characterizes her as civilized, millennial Robin Hood, politely taking from the ultra rich in order to provide culture to the less fortunate. She raises money from the prosperous in order to provide contemporary culture to a wide range of the

civilians. Peyton-Jones' methodology works within the current entrenched hierarchal class structure. She skillfully manages the contributor's expectations by providing lavish parties, a privilege understood as an acknowledgment of the elite who give generously. Peyton-Jones is a cultural entrepreneur. More accurately, she is an intrapreneur; this term designates a professional who executes ventures within an employee position in large companies, government institutes or not-for-profit groups, situated inside of the existing socio-political reality. She operates within a public art institute, eschewing the restrictive (and less profitable) arenas of the art-worldly, scholarly, academic and government supported agencies. Securing funding from upper capitalist sources, she facilitates a cultural apparatus that assails the capitalists system to provide art for all.

Peyton-Jones' redistribution of funds within the existing socio-economic structure of advanced capitalism could position her as a saint in the cultural arena. Her actions, however, represent social responsibility in the form of *noblesse oblige*. Peyton-Jones' title situates her as a person of influence, in the high status art world. She deliberately engages her upper echelon network to actualize a civic mission. Peyton-Jones uses the tools at her disposal catering to the rich to bring into being the aesthetically astounding and technologically advanced pavilions. Her methodologies and philosophy extends a long tradition in Britain of public service to the arts. In the latter half of the 1800's Sir Henry Cole worked tirelessly as a public servant expanding cultural institutes in Britain. Highly influential he conscripted the royal family's patronage to forward cultural initiatives.¹¹⁷ Peyton-Jones'

¹¹⁷ "Prince Albert's Cultural Legacy," BBC history, last up-dated September 19, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/0/23756880>.

fundraising methods also demonstrates the public service of a cultural practitioner who manipulates and utilizes her own high status position to give back, fulfilling her social and cultural imperative of advancing contemporary culture in the broad public realm.

VII

Peyton-Jones' pavilion program is a form of spectacular material and social culture, situated in the matrix of advanced capitalism. The program's pairing of spectacular culture and capitalism provides a lens onto the contemporary art world in this era. The exhibition format situates revolving iterations of contemporary architecture, in the Royal Park, free to the public; this format uniquely mediates the way the people come into contact with innovative structures. Importantly, though the project is paid for primarily by a checkerboard of corporate sponsors and wealthy individuals. This embeds the commission and its works in a hegemonic structure and characterizes an enmeshed relationship with capitalism. Theorists with left-leaning or Marxist views are opposed to the domination of capitalism in the cultural realm, and contest the collision of contemporary art situated in a globalized economic structure. Initiatives like the Serpentine pavilion commission are emblematic of tensions that spur extensive discourse on these ideological issues, in the art world and beyond.

In 2007 Tate Britain held a conference titled *Rethinking Spectacle* that sought to better understand issues regarding spectacle in current culture. The conference abstract summarizes common concerns about the pairing of spectacle and culture: "this symposium addresses recent claims that contemporary art is 'spectacularised'

and increasingly inseparable from the marketing of large-scale museums. But what do we really mean by ‘spectacle’ today? And how useful are Guy Debord’s ideas (Society of the Spectacle, 1967) for analyzing new conditions of the display of contemporary art?”¹¹⁸ The symposium’s summary captures issues around extravagant visuals and market positioning, and questions Debord’s theory. The Tate’s line of inquiry points to ongoing questioning taking place regarding the spectacle and contemporary art.

Debord is the most recognized theorist of the spectacle. He suggested that “in societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacle.” Indeed, for Debord, with his prescience about the role of simulation in the postmodernism world “Everything that was once directly lived has moved away into a representation.”¹¹⁹ Debord’s ideas capture a sense of spectacle in the system of advanced capitalism and its mediated society. His ideas powerfully contend with the omnipresent veil of corporate media culture and its domination in the socio-economic structure of the West. Debord’s theory provides a one-sided critique derived through the singular methodology of class analysis. His view suggests spectacle is an all-pervasive occurrence in the totalizing regime of advanced capitalism. The phenomenon of abundant spectacle in today’s cultural realm could, on the one hand, be viewed as an all-pervading element borne of a subsuming economic structure that reflects the inextricable entanglement of man, technology and economy. However Debord’s theory from the 1960’s could not anticipate the evolution of technology and the power of the

¹¹⁸ “Rethinking Spectacle,” Tate (Museum), May 11, 2007, <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/audio/rethinking-spectacle>.

¹¹⁹ Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 12.

Internet. The type of mega-change that the Internet has created in communication, forms of social organization and business operations and its global impact is defined by those in the innovation world as a disrupter; a force of unprecedented magnitude that is difficult to anticipate.

Philosopher and historian Marshall Berman offers an alternative, affirming description of modernization in a world dominated by technology. For him, capitalism is a place where there is individual power and the personal ability to insight change. Berman summarizes contemporary life as:

[a]systems of mass communication, dynamic in their development, enveloping and binding together the most diverse people and societies; increasingly powerful nation states, bureaucratically structured and operated, constantly striving to expand their powers; mass social movements of people, and peoples, challenging their political and economic rulers, striving to gain some control over their lives; finally, bearing and riveting all these people and institutions along, an ever-expanding, drastically fluctuating capitalist world market.¹²⁰

Berman's views contextualize the concept of the world in globalization. He foregrounds human agency as an attribute within the framework of modernization:

“these world-historical processes [modernization and the expanding capitalist world market] have nourished an amazing variety of visions and ideas that aim to make men and women the subjects as well as the objects of modernization, to give them power to change the world that is changing them, to make their way through the maelstrom and make it their own.”¹²¹ Other 21st century sociologists and scholars of globalization, including Manuel Castells¹²² and Saskin Sassen,¹²³ posit a similar

¹²⁰ Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: the Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 16.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹²² “Afterword: Why Networks Matter,” Demos, by Manuel Castells, accessed December 9, 2013, <http://www.demos.co.uk/files/File/networklogic17castells.pdf>.

process of social organization within advanced capitalism that builds on Berman's stance.

Peyton-Jones' vision for the pavilion series concretizes the ideological tenants of innovation and creativity. Her actions as a cultural agent reflect Berman's theoretical apparition of modernism: she has pursued her ideas within the capitalist world market and positively affected the cultural arena. Peyton-Jones has enhanced public awareness of contemporary architecture and provided a mechanism in the public realm for sponsored creativity of the highest order. The international architects who have designed the Serpentine pavilions must be seen both as instruments of Peyton-Jones' visionary power and as autonomous actors delivering to the world stage works of creative vision and technical innovation. The Serpentine pavilions represent aesthetically and technologically progressive ideas for building that often foreshadow future trends. Fujimoto, for example, from the outset argued that his pavilion represented a new form of environment. And given his creative authority, his pavilion might well influence the evolving industry sector in which he practices.

Berman views modernism as a dynamic era of cultural advancement. He suggest that in the third phase of modernization, "the process of modernization expands to take in virtually the whole world, and the developing world culture of modernism achieves spectacular triumphs in art and though."¹²³ Ultimately, Peyton-Jones' creation and sustaining of the Serpentine Gallery Pavilion series, free to the public accomplishes her goal of art for all. This cultural achievement

¹²³ "Cities as Frontier Zones: Making Informal Politics," 2 Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art, by Saskia Sassen, accessed December 9, 2013, http://2nd.moscowbiennale.ru/en/sassen_report/

¹²⁴ Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, 17.

demonstrates how she has worked successfully within today's socio-economic system and made it her own. The pavilion project that delivers astonishing structure annually stands as an example of spectacular triumphs in contemporary architecture and thought.

Conclusion

Peyton-Jones' Serpentine Gallery Pavilion commission moves her beyond a hybrid curator-director to a maker of the spectacle. She implements an amended Biennale format, running an annual, reoccurring, abbreviated high-profile transnational affair that showcases just a single remarkable work. Her brief pushes for innovative visual manifestations, requesting simply that a unique architectural language to be realized in a pavilion form, advancing to new levels an architectural typology that inherently incorporates an intensified, unexpected aesthetic. In conjunction with a social agenda that exploits the cult of celebrity, Peyton-Jones creates a multi-tiered, potent spectacle, and commands astounding attendance records for the small gallery's single-work exhibit. Using spectacle as a cultural delivery mechanism, Peyton-Jones achieves her underlying altruistic mission: to move audiences towards the embrace of contemporary architecture and deliver art for all.

In the contemporary world, where there are concerns around private jets and designer fashion, Peyton-Jones uses elitism as economic armature. Her strategies for the pavilion project and its programming successfully forward her mission to advance public and scholarly conversations around, and engagement with, contemporary architecture. Peyton-Jones has directed the architectural series for fourteen years; the resulting variations on pavilion typography have each been as unique as the Fujimoto's techno-infused digital cloud. This case study has illuminated the ideological implications of contemporary culture and its entanglement with spectacle. The commission's mechanisms, conflated with

Fujimoto's wondrous architecture, elucidate how spectacle operates within in the high-end art world. At the Serpentine, spectacle is at once a practical driver of the architectural series, and a cultural economic device.

Controversy around spectacle's capitalistic values is unlikely to resolve. However, Peyton-Jones methodologies and the Serpentine Pavilion series offers a model that reveals how spectacle can be performed in multiple ways, and that spectacle can be a positive phenomena. Critically for art and architectural history, Peyton-Jones' revolving pavilion program facilitates an invigorating international conversation about the use, value and role of spectacle and its impact on culture and architecture.

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Appendix A

Varind Ramful:
Serpentine Galleries
Communication Coordinator
020 7298 1519

Varind Ramful [varind@serpentinegalleries.org]
Wed 1/8/2014 11:50 AM

Dear Terry,

Many thanks for your email. Following on from our telephone conversation, please find the attached press pack and press images can be downloaded from our press page here:

<http://www.serpentinegalleries.org/about/press/2013/06/exhibitions/serpentine-gallery-pavilion-2013-designed-sou-fujimoto-8-june-20-october>

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Kind regards,

V