

# Relocation, relocation, relocation?



Portavilion, the world's smallest mobile cinema, designed by Hopkins Architects for use in the London Festival of Architecture 2008. Pics courtesy of Hopkins Architects

TRADA's Head of Marketing and Information Services, Jeremy Vibert, focuses on reusable buildings

**W**e live in a world that's changing all the time, where flexibility is important, not least in the built environment. Timber buildings can be demountable (put up and taken down again), relocatable (build it, then move it somewhere else) or multi-use (a school in the week and community centre at weekends).

They can – and do – consist of everything from site storage and temporary ticket offices, to awnings and sun-screening

for athletes' venues and accommodation.

Temporary, however, does not necessarily mean short-lived. Mawson's Antarctic huts, built 97 years ago, demonstrate the durability of timber buildings in the most inhospitable of climates.

Another 'extreme' example is the Silver Hut, designed in marine plywood by TRADA in 1960 for Sir Edmund Hillary's Himalayan scientific expedition. The hut was erected at 5,800m on the Mingbo Glacier in Nepal, about 10 miles from Everest.

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The 7m x 3m cylindrical hut was carried in 100 sections from Kathmandu. It was still in use in 2000 at the training base camp of the Indian Himalayan Mountaineering Institute.

More substantial, but equally seasonal, was the Buckingham Palace ticket office, designed by Michael Hopkins Architects, and erected every summer for the public opening of the palace to serve its 250,000 visitors. The pavilion was situated at the edge of Green Park and its distinctive soaring

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white canopy sheltered visitors from the sun and rain. Used for several years from 1995, the ticket office was subsequently bought by Prince Charles and is believed to be somewhere on the Highgrove Estate.

At the other end of the spectrum is the spectacular Swiss Palais de L'Equilibre. At 40m in diameter and 27m high – about the size of the dome of Saint Peter's in Rome – the Swiss Globe is the tallest timber structure in the world. It

was designed by Group H architects, working with structural engineers Charpente Concept.

In its original location at the Swiss Expo in 2002, Palais de L'Equilibre handled 1,000 visitors per hour, each visitor taking about 20 minutes to view the exhibition. The building is interesting for many reasons. Firstly, it is built from timber recycled from the Swiss Pavilion at the 2000 Hanover Expo. Five species were used in the Globe's construction: Scots pine,

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Douglas fir, spruce, larch and Canadian maple, which enables the building to act as a carbon sink. The Globe has found a new home with CERN, the Centre for Science and Innovation in Geneva, as the starting point for all visits to the laboratories.

A more functional approach to transportable buildings is Bryden Wood Associates' patented Rapid Deployment System (RDS), an open-plan single-storey building that is easily transportable to virtually anywhere in the world. RDS buildings include services, glazing and finishes, and are ideal for temporary offices, corporate entertainment or accommodation. Any number of units can be joined together.

An RDS module can be erected by two people in 30 minutes. The 3.5m-wide modules can be up to 10 metres long. Although three metres high when assembled, the modules collapse to 0.65m for efficient shipping, thus countering one of the arguments against pre-fabricated volumetric buildings. One 140m<sup>2</sup> building, made up of five 8m-long RDS modules, can be transported on one lorry without special permission or escort.

In summary, reusable buildings can be anything we need them to be, limited only, it seems, by the imagination of the designer.



*Above photographs show River Cottage bus stop and food stall. Pictured left... Bryden Wood Associates' patented Rapid Deployment System*