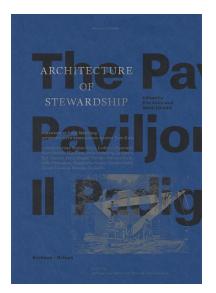
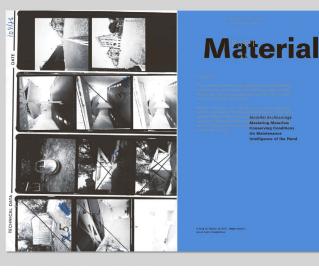
Architecture of Stewardship





Architecture is often seen as the creation of the architect alone. However, architecture is a collaborative endeavour involving diverse professionals, from urban planners, building designers and construction labourers to restoration architects, repair workers and maintenance staff.

Preserving built heritage depends on stewardship – a shared responsibility that involves caring for and steering the future of common goods. In the built environment, stewardship goes beyond maintaining structures to include decisions about access, future use, and redistribution. The Pavilion of Finland in Venice's Giardini della Biennale Park stands as a testament to this. Originally designed as a temporary structure by Alvar Aalto and his office for the 1956 International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, the delicate wooden building has become a permanent monument. This wouldn't be possible without continuous maintenance and repair.

By recounting the Pavilion's history, this book illustrates that buildings are not static objects but dynamic processes influenced by human actions, global politics and non-human forces. The title, Architecture of Stewardship, proposes that adopting practices of stewardship enables the architectural profession to respond to the urgent need for change in our built environment with accountability to communities, future generations, the planet, and other species that inhabit it. The collection of essays offers perspectives on stewardship from a range of Finnish and Italian contributors in academia, practice, and activism. The texts explore how people have stewarded land, resources, and communities throughout the Pavilion's history and its Venetian context, and how these insights might inspire a different way to approach our built environment.

The book is published in conjunction with the Pavilion of Finland's exhibition at the 19th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, running from 10 May to 23 November 2025. The editors of the book, architects Ella Kaira and Matti Jänkälä, curated the exhibition, The Pavilion – Architecture of Stewardship, commissioned and produced by Archinfo – Information Centre for Finnish Architecture.

FACTS

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Press inquiries

Ulrika Danielsson ulrika@ao-publishing.com + 46 (0) 73 984 47 90

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"A raging storm, on the 7th of October 2011, felled an ancient tree in the Giardini, in the compound of the Venice Biennale. It hit the Finnish Pavilion with force, broke part of the sky-light construction and distorted the whole structure of this little wooden building."

Tuula Pöyhiä, who served as a senior architect at the Alvar Aalto Foundation from 2009 to 2018, recalls how a tempest struck Venice, causing a large, decaying honey locust beside the Pavilion to split, shattering the Pavilion's roof. For years, the tree had been rotting from within, hollowed out by tree-eating insect. After weeks of autumn storms and fierce sirocco winds, the tree that had taken root long before the Pavilion of Finland was built, finally gave way. An autumn storm, a gust of wind, broken giass, and shattered structures – these are events beyond human control, unfolding on a local scale.

structures – these are events beyond human control, unfolding on a local scale. The failen honey locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*) at the Finnish Pavlino serves as a reminder that plants, fungi, insects, and other forms of life exist for their own intrinsic purposes. While the tree might seem artificial – an introduced species in this carefully curated landscape, like so many other plants in the Glardin della Blennale Park, sourced from diverse regions – it also lowites us to reconsider its role: viewed as a protagonist, the honey locust becomes a lens for coordinate wildness' that endures not only in distant, unamed landscapes but also within the gardens we cultivate. Although gardens embody humanity's efforts to control nature, William Cronon wars against viewing nature as separate form ds, as this perspective can encourage environmental irresponsibility: "We need to honor the ther wind have sit no such as the exolt Other far away."

Ella Kaira Matti jänkälä

life of a tree shaped by human hands and the interdependent exist ence it shares with the Lagoon's fragile waters.

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stump of the fallen honey locust e source: Alvar Aalto Foundation









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